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The Holy Wars of King Wladislas and Sultan Murad

The Ottoman-Christian Conflict from 1438-1444

By John Jefferson

BRILL

The Holy Wars of King Wladislas and Sultan Murad

History of Warfare

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Uxori meae amatissimae

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INTRODUCTION

The Final Charge

Late in the afternoon on the tenth of November, 1444, a group of Hungarian and Polish noblemen crowded around their king not far from the fortress of Varna on the Bulgarian coast. These men had undergone a long journey, which had begun on the shores of the Danube in September with the grandiose hope of conquering the Ottoman capital of Edirne, thereby expelling the Turks from Europe. The move had surprised the Ottoman sultan, Murad II, since Wladislas, king of Poland and Hungary, had earlier that summer negotiated, signed, and solemnly sworn to a ten-year truce. Yet the crusaders had been caught off guard as well. Until recently they had been under the impression that an international fleet composed of Venetian, Burgundian, Ragusan and papal galleys had successfully blockaded the straits separating the sultan's Asian and European dominions. The fleet commanders had announced to the king that Murad and his army were stranded in Anatolia. By the time Wladislas learned that the Sultan had in fact crossed the straits, despite the presence of the crusader fleet, the sultan was already headed to the battlefield accompanied by the most powerful army in Europe. Upon hearing the news the crusaders made their way to the coastal city of Varna hoping to either defeat the sultan or find some avenue of escape.

Murad and his army arrayed themselves before Varna in the early morning. Soon after a fierce battle began. Though greatly outnumbered, the Christian forces succeeded in routing and/or killing the majority of the Ottoman army, and had even slain the Beylerbey of Anatolia, Karaca Bey, who commanded half the forces of the Empire and in military affairs answered only to the sultan. A sense of panic was beginning to spread among the sultan's troops, their usual confidence shaken after having suffered repeated defeats from the Hungarians since 1440. The janissaries, hoping to quit the battlefield and avoid the capture of the Ottoman ruler, as had happened at the Battle of Ankara 42 years prior, were advising Murad to withdraw. The Ottoman historian Neşri describes this moment in the Ottoman camp:

> Having witnessed this [the defeat of the Anatolian troops and the martyrdom of [(Güyeğü) Karaca Bey] the Rumelian army withdrew to a wide-open space

> and scattered. The sultan with only his janissaries left was on the verge of retreating as well. (Dayı) Karaca Bey[1], aware of this situation, dismounted from his horse, grabbed the sultan's horse's reins, and said, "Hey, my sultan! What is this? If you go, the infidel will follow behind our backs to Edirne." He did not let go of the sultan's horse's reins. He rode off to the top of a high place and stopped, and halted [the sultan's horse]. At this time there was a janissary agha they called Kazancı Doğan. He reproached Karaca Bey saying with a dour expression, "You killed sultan Alaeddin. This time you intend to do the same to our sultan. Let go [of the reins] and go." Karaca Bey was by no means deterred. Sultan Murad said to Karaca Bey, "The infidel has crushed us." To which Karaca Bey replied, "We will crush them, God willing."[2]

Murad declined the advice of his own janissaries, and heeding Dayı Karaca Bey he resolved to stay, bracing himself for the coming assault. This decision would prove decisive in what was to come.

The success of the Christian army thus far had been due largely to the competent and decisive command of John Hunyadi, one of the great military leaders of his time. His fame, though well-deserved and hard won through the last four years of campaigning, had nonetheless aroused the envy of his peers. The fifteenth-century Byzantine historian Chalkokondyles records a speech purportedly delivered at Varna by the Hungarian nobles which, though certainly fabricated, nonetheless sums up the prevailing sentiment:

> There were many men in the king's company who were jealous of Hunyadi and they bore bitterly his virtue in combat. Seeing that he waged war excellently and properly, and that he had put the Army of Asia to flight, and that he was fighting nobly against the Army of Europe, whose leader named Karaca he had slain, they spoke thusly to the king: "O King, why do we stand

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[1] Dayı Karaca Bey is not to be confused with his namesake, Güyeğü Karaca Bey the Beylerbey of Anatolia, who had died earlier in the battle. Oruç Bey himself makes this error. Oruç Bey, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman* (*Oruç Beğ Tarihi*), ed. by Prof. Dr. Necdet Öztürk (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), p. 68. Hereafter simply referred to as Oruç Bey.

[2] Mehmed Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-Nüma, Neşri Tarihi*, 2 vols., ed. by Faik Reşit Unat and Prof. Mehmed Köymen (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kürümü Basimevi, 1987), vol.2, pp. 653–655. The translation here from the original Turkish is my own, as it is in other places unless otherwise indicated. The role of Dayı Karaca Bey is confirmed by two other Ottoman sources, Zaifi (Gürol Pehlivan, "Varna Savaşı ve Bir Tarih Kaynağı Olarak Gazâvatnâmeler," *Turkish Studies* 3/4 (Summer 2008): 598–617, p. 613) and Kashifi (Ibid.) Mention of it is also made in Chalkokondyles, though he does not give the name. The Greek historian Paraspondylos Zotikos (Émile Legrand, "La Bataille de Varna par Paraspondylos Zotikos," *Annuaire de L'association pour L'encouragement des Études Grecques en France*, nr. 8 (1874): 333–372, p. 358) wrote that a janissary threatened to cut off Murad's head should he attempt to withdraw. However Paraspondylos, who was hiding in the woods at this point in the battle, was in no position to observe what was taking place in the Ottoman camp.

> here and wait for John [Hunyadi], allowing him to conquer the enemy and to accomplish what remains as if he were one man alone? It brings us great dishonor. While we waste time here idly, we allow your servant to rush at and fight against the enemy. It is most fitting that the king in our army should do military deeds, which might earn great praise from our wives and from those who occupy our cities, as well as among the Turks. Indeed he who puts to flight such a great multitude of men will attain immortal glory, yet standing here and watching what is taking place you are resigned to ignominy. How will you relate this to posterity? For it is not that you are afraid. For there is no fear that we should be defeated attacking the soldiers of the Porte (janissaries), since the Army of Asia was put to flight by John [Hunyadi] with ease. Indeed, if you do not waver, they will begin to flee. Act, therefore! Let us march against the sultan's janissaries. For since you are king, it is fitting that you should battle with a king.[3]

Though the Christians had up to now achieved much success, they had also suffered massive losses. The army, which had been fighting since ten o'clock that morning, was exhausted and had no means of retreat should the battle turn against them. Isolated groups were beginning to break from the lines and head for safety among the neighboring hills. The king saw an opportunity for decisive action. In one great charge with what remained of his personal retinue he might dislodge the sultan's forces, perhaps capture, even slay the Emperor of the Infidels with his own hand. Yet Hunyadi, fearing what such rash action might lead to, strongly disapproved:

> The day is yours. Do not put yourself at risk by going to fight these archers (the janissaries) on the mountain,[4] because they will kill your horses and send your men to perdition. They (Wladislas' troops) have won the battle, there is no sense in risking it. While on the mountain, the sultan can do no harm. If he descends from the mountain to fight them (Wladislas' troops), theirs is the advantage. Tomorrow he must either flee or surrender to you. Most of your men who have fought are tired. They have lost lances and weapons. The sun has set and night is falling. You will be at a great disad-

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[3] Laonikos Chalkokondyles, *Historiarum Libri Decem*, ed. Emmanuel Bekker (Bonn: Weber, 1843), pp. 353–354.

[4] The reference here to a mountain is somewhat misleading. Murad's position, as I can best determine, was at an elevation significantly higher than that of the Crusaders' position (see Battle of Varna maps). Yet his encampment, to which he seems to have retreated after the defeat of large numbers of the janissaries and imperial azabs (and possibly after Wladislas had already begun his charge), was located in a valley near this rise, though still at an elevation higher than the Crusaders' position. Also problematic is the use of the term "janissary." Most Christian texts, and even a good deal of modern historians, fail to make a distinction between the Janissary Corps and the other Slaves of the Porte (see chapter four for more details). The troops guarding Murad's camp were not necessarily janissaries of the Janissary Corps but specialized troops such as the solaklar (again, see chapter four for more details).

> vantage if you fight or attack people at night, who are waiting for you calmly on foot. When they see that you are climbing up the mountain when they, to their advantage, are all fresh and rested, they will defend themselves courageously. For the sake of God, do not put yourself in a position to lose everything that has been gained. The strongest part of all the enemy army has been routed.[5]

The king chose to ignore his captain's advice, and instead followed the advice of the noblemen. He spurred on his horse, followed by a hand-picked contingent of his proudest and strongest knights, totaling perhaps as little as 500 men.[6] They surged ahead of the other Hungarian troops along the battle lines and charged after the sultan in his entrenched camp. "The Hungarians and Poles set about them like tigers, mauling the ones at the front of the circle[7] no matter how many Christians and horses [the janissaries] wounded and killed."[8] Murad's own scribes noted with wonder the ferocity of the king's charge: "Then those accursed men with no religion, those lawless reprobates, abandoned their lust for life and love for home and family and attacked so fiercely that the earth could not withstand the heat of battle, the air could not endure their harshness and, out of fear, the sun took flight to the safety of the dust."[9]

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[5] Passage taken from the chronicle of Jehan de Wavrin, as translated in Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna* (*1443–1444*) (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 131–132. The texts contained therein are hereafter referred to by the author of the source and followed by the words "Imber's translation," to indicate they derive from the above-mentioned book rather than my personal translation of the original texts. Even if the possibility that the text is a literal rendition of Hunyadi's words is quite slim, the sentiment related therein seems a faithful reflection of Hunyadi's advice. Waleran de Wavrin, the source of the chronicle, had met Hunyadi personally in 1445 not long after the battle. Other chronicles, including Ottoman ones, have Hunyadi advising the king prior to the campaign to stay put and not charge after the enemy. Hunyadi himself noted in a later letter allegedly addressed to Murad II that Wladislas refused to listen to his advice regarding the final charge. He therefore absolved himself of responsibility for the king's death in a letter found in Augustus Sokołowski , ed., *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol.1, Part of the series *Monumenta Medii Aevi Res Gestas Poloniae Illustrantia*, vol. 2 (Krakow: Akademia Umiejętności Krakowskiej, 1876), p. 25: "Even though the king fell in war it was not our fault. He was the head of the army, and did not want to follow our counsel, but acted rashly. If he had placed his trust in us, he would never have fallen into your hands. But it was his position to command; ours to obey."

[6] Michel Beheim, *Die Gedichte des Michel Beheim*, vol. 1., ed. Hans Gille (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1968), line 773.

[7] See below for a description of the circular trench and troop fortifications surrounding the sultan's camp.

[8] From the Burgundian chronicle of Jehan de Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 132).

[9] This is contained in Murad's Fethname, or declaration of victory, to the Persian Shah (Imber's translation, p. 194). A number of these documents were sent to various rulers of the Muslim world.

Along with those men among the janissaries who had not yet fled, the sultan still had some of the Slaves of the Porte, the personal soldiers of his household, to defend him.[10] Murad was moreover well-entrenched in a fortified position in accordance with Ottoman practice.[11] This position consisted of a trench and bulwark, with thousands of iron stakes[12] lining the top, behind which stood men armed with cannon and arquebus.[13] Behind these men were the soldiers of the palace. Then came a row of camels lined together so as to further impede the enemy. Finally the *solaklar*, or the sultan's personal bodyguards handpicked from the Janissary Corps were drawn up in a protective formation.

Many of Wladislas' men were dispersed or otherwise killed by the gunfire and bowshot while attempting to breach this prepared position.[14] The king, including a number of his knights, was having great difficulty breaking out of the trench.[15] In an act of will and desperation Wladislas finally burst through the impasse, spurring his horse forward he headed straight for the sultan himself. One of Murad's slave bodyguards standing in the

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[10] Oruç Bey (p. 60) writes that Murad had only 500 janissaries. The author of the Gazavât states that 300 janissaries and 400–500 azabs remained with Murad. Halil İnalcik and Mevlud Oğuz, eds., *Ğazavât-ı Sultân Murâd b. Mehemmed Hân, İzladi ve Varna Savaşları (1443–1444) Üzerinde Anonim Gazavâtnâme* (1978; reprint, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989), p. 64 (Imber's translation, p. 99). Zaifi writes that 5,000 Slaves of the Porte stood by the king. Zaifi's numbers in other places, however, are highly exaggerated (Pehlivan, p. 613).

[11] This position is described by Chalkokondyles, pp. 331–332.

[12] That these stakes were made of iron, not wood, is mentioned not only in the aforementioned passage in Chalkokondyles, but also by Bartolomeo di Giano, who writing from Constantinople mentions the manufacture of 30,000 (sic!) iron stakes in 1438 (presumably in Genoese workshops in Pera) prior to the sultan's campaign into Serbia. J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 158 (Paris: 1856), p. 1066.

[13] Konstantin Mihalović, writing some twenty years later, reports the general use of firearms mounted behind shields within the imperial encampment. Their use at Varna is mentioned by Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 613). In the Gazavât Murad orders a certain Danışmanoğlu to bring cannon to the battle (Gazavât, p. 56; Imber's translation, p. 91), and Mehmet had summoned cannoneers to the army when he proclaimed the generaly levy that year (Gazavât, p. 43). These weapons do not seem to have been deployed outside of Murad's fortified camp.

[14] Zaifi, p. 613.

[15] According to Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 613) and the Gazavât (p. 66; Imber's translation, p. 100) they made seven charges in an attempt to break through. Paraspondylos (p. 361), Oruç Bey (p. 67) and Zaifi all state that the king broke through the ditch on his last charge and almost reached the sultan himself. Segono, a Serbian/Dalmatian historian, also wrote that the king had broken through both the ditch and the palisade before his horse was cut down: Agostino Pertusi, ed., *Martino Segono di Novo Brdo Vescovo di Dulcigno, un umanista serbo-dalmata del tardo Quattrocento, vita e opere* (Roma: Palazzo Borromini, 1981), p. 128.

king's path, a man by the name of Koca Hızır,[16] rose to counter the threat. Wielding his *balta,* or short battle axe, he hamstrung the king's mount with a single blow. Wladislas fell to the earth along with his horse. When Wladislas, the "Champion of Christendom" and the sovereign of two kingdoms, hit the ground he lay helpless in the weight of his armor and the press of enemy troops. Koca Hızır grabbed his axe, lopped off the king's head and brought it to Murad. The sultan summoned one of the crusader captives, and when he positively identified the head as belonging to the enemy king Murad immediately dismounted, bowed his head to the ground and gave a prayer of thanks. He then ordered the head to be stuck on a pike and raised aloft for both armies to witness.[17] Though the battle continued to rage on, the Turks had secured their victory.

Two pivotal command decisions were made during the battle of Varna. The first: Murad II's decision to remain on the battlefield and not retreat after the majority of his troops had been routed and the battle seemed lost. The second, and perhaps more dramatic, was Wladislas' uphill charge, near sunset, against a vastly superior force of disciplined infantry—all this at a time when the battle was more or less won. "Why?" I first asked this question while studying as an undergrad in Krakow, Poland, in a seminar course given by my advisor at the time, Prof. Dr. Krzysztof Baczkowski. The question surrounding Wladislas' final charge never left me, and this dissertation was my attempt to answer it.

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[16] Oruç Bey (p. 67) refers to him as one of the epic heroes of Islam. Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 615) simply states that he was one of the sultan's slaves.

[17] Oruç Bey, the Gazavât and Zaifi report that Koca Hızır chopped off the king's head. Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 615), however, writes that a certain hero named Mustafa felled the horse first, then Koca Hızır decapitated the king. He says that both men, not just Koca Hızır, were then generously rewarded by the sultan. According to Paraspondylos the name of the soldier who felled the king's horse and placed his head on a pike was named Hamza (Paraspondylos, p. 362). Credit is given to Koca Hızır in both Ahmet Derviş Aşıkpaşazâde, *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, edited and translated into Modern Turkish by Prof. Dr.Orhan Oğuz (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1970), p. 144 and Neşri (p. 655), who, like Oruç Bey, state that he placed the head on a spear. What is more curious is that in the fethname written after the battle to the Karakoyunlu (Imber's translation, p. 194) and to Jakmak, the Mameluke Sultan in Cairo (Bibliothèque Nationale, Manuscrits Arabes nr. 4434, pp. 133b-138b), it is written that the king was first brought to the sultan (whether alive or dead is not certain) and then he was beheaded after it was determined that in fact it was the king. This would seem more in keeping with Schiltberger's account of the decapitation of the Prince of Karaman after his defeat by Bayezid at Akçay in 1397 (Johann Schiltberger, *Als Sklave im Osmanischen Reich und bei den Tartaren 1394–1427*, edited with modernized text by Ulrich Schlemmer (Wiesbaden: Edition Erdmann, 2008), pp. 51–52). In that instance Bayezid, angered at the soldier's presumption in killing the prince, ordered that the soldier receive the same punishment. Bayezid proclaimed that thereafter all such prisoners of great status were to be first brought before the sultan.

Wladislas' and Murad's decisions were not simply capricious expressions of sovereign whim. They were determined, and in many ways bound by rational and irrational considerations and the contexts framing these considerations. The options of attack, stay or retreat all had enormous ramifications not only for the outcome of the battle but for the very reign and even the very person of the sovereigns involved. Because of his decision Murad retained his position as the head of an empire; Wladislas lost both his head and his kingdoms. One way of understanding the choices at Varna, then, is to understand the military and political consequences, immediate and long-term, that the two men had to consider. "If I remain on the battlefield," Murad had to ask, "will I emerge victorious or vanquished? That is to say, can my army win? If I quit the battlefield, then what are the consequences for my realm, my dynasty and my person?"

Rational considerations of military and political consequences do not describe these decisions entirely. There were irrational considerations as well. Among them were religion, personal ambition, a sense of culture and dynastic tradition. The role of these "irrational" considerations in the conflicts I will describe is two-fold. As powerful forces of influence, individuals were not only affected by them, they used them to affect and influence others. This was as true for the baggage handlers and foot soldiers as it was for the king himself. When Wladislas decided to charge the sultan directly, he was not only driven by a strong, "irrational" desire to slay "the enemies of Christ," but also by a desire to cultivate an image of himself as Christendom's champion, an image which he had used, and hoped to continue to use for very rational political ends.

In attempting to answer somewhat the question of "Why did Wladislas charge the sultan at Varna and why did the sultan stand his ground?" one has to explore the contexts in which these decisions were made and the events leading up to them. The first part of this work deals primarily with the institutions, politics and dynastic goals of the three main parties—the Church, the Ottomans and the Kingdom of Hungary. The narrative alternates between describing the people and events which led to the conflict of 1438–1444, and the institutional and ideological framework behind them. Part Two continues the narrative in Part One, with a greater focus on the campaigns taking place during Wladislas' reign in Hungary, i.e. 1440–1444.

The Historiography of the Conflict

From the moment Wladislas died there were attempts to spin the narrative of these momentous events for reasons both political and personal. Reports of the battle and even of the king's survival were deliberately falsified to reduce the political fallout in Poland and Hungary. Years after the immediate impact subsided contemporary politics continued to influence the historical narratives. The single best contemporary western narrative source for these events, the Polish chronicler John Długosz,[18] was clearly led, despite his largely critical approach, by a desire to rehabilitate the image of the Polish-Hungarian king. He openly admits this fact in his chronicle. Though a gifted historian, he felt a need to respond to works by Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II) and other contemporaries who had disparaged Wladislas and his role. The Hungarian chronicler Thuróczy, writing independently of Długosz and with significantly less historical craft, was led by a similar impulse. Writing for a Hungarian audience he strove to lionize Hunyadi and his accomplishments to the greatest extent possible. These two chroniclers were followed in the fifteenth century by another round of Polish and Hungarian historians—Callimachus and Bonfini. Callimachus' work *Historia de rege Vladislao*[19] is the source of much error on the part of later historians.[20] The author clearly relied on Długosz as his main, if not only, source and filled in the gaps with his own fancy and to please his benefactors. To Callimachus' credit, he was working within the tradition of Renaissance panegyric intending to compliment Wladislas' brother and successor in Poland, Casimir, to whom the work is dedicated.

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[18] The works mentioned in this section are by no means exhaustive. For a more thorough list, see the excellent bibliographies contained in Cvetkova's *La Bataille Memorable des Peuples* and Adnan Erzi's "Türkiye Kütüphanelerden notlar ve vesikalar", *Belleten*, vol. 14 (1950). The bibliography at the end of this work contains some of the more recent scholarship not found in those two bibliographies.

This judgment refers to his account of the years 1438–1444, not simply of the Battle of Varna. Jan Długosz, *Annales seu Cronicae Incliti Regni Poloniae 1431–1444*, Books XI-XII, ed. Czesława Pirożyńska with commentary by Lidia Korczak (Warsaw: PWN, 2001). His narrative of the Battle of Varna is directly based off Andreas de Pallatio's eyewitness account published in a letter. See chapter seven.

[19] Critically edited Latin text with accompanying Polish translation by Irmina Lichońska (Warsaw: PWN, 1961.)

[20] German historians of the nineteenth century were particularly seduced by Callimachus' narrative and their histories reflect his errors. See for example Küpelwieser, *Die Kämpfe Ungarns mit den Osmanen bis zur Schlacht bei Mohács*, 1526 (Wien: 1899).

Callimachus did not fail to compliment his other patrons as well.[21] In agreement with Jarosław Nikodem[22] and other Polish scholars I find almost no historical value in the *Historia de rege Vladislao* in terms of establishing a narrative of events. On the contrary, there are many pitfalls in using the source due to the author's tendency to fabricate. Some of Callimachus' fabrications crept into the work of Antonio Bonfini, the celebrated court historian of Hunyadi's son, King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary. Bonfini seems to have used all three of the above sources—Długosz , Callimachus and Thuróczy. At times, when the sources differed from one another, he mentioned two possibilities. At other times, such as in his narrative of Şehabeddin's defeat in 1442, he is guilty of fabrication on par with Callimachus.[23] Since almost all of the information in his chronicle for this period can be traced back to one of the three above-listed sources I refer to him very sparingly.

Aside from the effect on their own local politics, most fifteenth-century Christian chroniclers saw the conflict from 1438–1444 and its climax at Varna as a final prelude to the capture of Constantinople, i.e. a last and failed attempt to liberate the East. This was true most of all of the Byzantines. Their hopes of possible liberation via a Western crusade perished along with the Polish-Hungarian king. It is perhaps for this reason that the great Byzantine historians devoted so much attention to these events, in many cases more than to the 1453 siege of Constantinople. Their narratives, often informed by Byzantine, Western and Ottoman sources constitute a valuable and unique perspective on the events. A similarly unique view is gained from non-Balkan Christian sources, in particular the Burgundians (Wavrin or Brocquière). Though they participated in these events they were less immediately affected by the outcome, and were writing for an entirely different audience with a wholly separate agenda.

For Ottoman historians the conflict and its dramatic outcome served as clear confirmation of the dynasty's divine mission. It was a great victory handed to them by God and should be remembered as such by future generations. With their emphasis on victory as confirmation of Providential backing, the Ottoman historians downplayed severely any hints of defeat

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[21] Some authors believe Gregory of Sanok, Callimachus' patron, was the source for much of his narrative. The references to Sanok's role in the campaigns are made by Callimachus himself, and are likely exaggerated if not completely fabricated. See J. Nikodem "Długosz i Kallimach o koronie węgierskiej Władysława III," in *Balcanica Posnaniensa*, vol. VIII (1997): 145–166.

[22] See previous note for reference.

[23] See chapter five for a description of this battle.

in the years prior to 1444. The failed Ottoman Siege of Belgrade in 1440, described at length by western sources, barely receives mention in Ottoman narratives. On the whole, however, these histories are equally if not more reliable than their western counterparts. A description of these events as part of the greater conquest narrative of the Ottoman dynasty continued to play a large role in the lengthy Ottoman histories of the early sixteenth century. Their main drawback and a source of unending frustration for the historian is the almost universal lack of dates in Ottoman chronicles, which have to be determined in large part by reference to Western sources. Arab histories tend to do a much better job of dating and are invaluable in determining contemporary events in Anatolia and the Near East. It is a pity that they make such limited mention of events in the Balkans.

Most useful in establishing places, names and dates are the literally hundreds of letters and other contemporary Western documents. Written mostly in Latin and published in a number of different collections and compilations they are the best means of nailing down the "historical grammar" of the events. Most contain a clear place and date of issue contemporary to the events themselves. They are addressed to a specific audience often for the purpose of providing accurate and comprehensive information with an agenda quite different from the narrative chronicles. It was not until the twentieth century that extensive critical use was made of these documents (perhaps due to their publication throughout the nineteenth century), which resulted in a number of corrections to earlier historical works which had been based mostly on chronicles. There are also a handful of Ottoman letters and documents from the period, which likewise provide a firsthand perspective of the dynasty's political and military agenda. As more and more archives containing Ottoman documents are exhaustively examined perhaps future researchers will discover more of these sources.

After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and the defeat of Hungary in 1526 the Battle of Varna faded into relative obscurity, with a living memory of the event kept alive mostly in tales and folksongs. It no longer seemed relevant to the current state of affairs in which the Ottomans seemed firmly and forever entrenched in the Balkans. It was not until Ottoman authority began to collapse that memories of the crusade resurfaced. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Wladislas and the story of his dramatic defeat appeared in a number of Polish plays, particularly those written by the Jesuit intelligentsia. The event served as fodder for Protestant propagandists as well, who saw Cesarini's absolution of the king's oath of peace in

1444 and the resulting defeat as divine retribution for canonical, papist folly.[24] With the second siege of Vienna and the ensuing Ottoman defeat another attempt to expel the Ottomans from Rumelia seemed inevitable. The legend surrounding figures such as Hunyadi and Wladislas were revisited in this context. Gibbon devoted most of chapter 67 of his multi-volume *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to these events.

The spread of nationalism and the Balkan liberation movement of the nineteenth century naturally provoked a revisitation of the events of the 1440s. In contrast to previous centuries, the conflict was seen less as a struggle of Christendom versus Islam and more of a national struggle between the peoples of East-Central Europe and their perceived oppressor the Ottoman Turks. Poland and Hungary, though not occupied by the Ottomans, were nonetheless involved in their own liberation movements and the heroic figures of Hunyadi and Wladislas were drawn out to inspire whole generations of militant revolutionaries. Much as Długosz in the fifteenth century, Polish historians sought to present Wladislas in the best possible light, in part as a reaction against German historiography which tended to downplay Poland's achievements during its Golden Age. During this time the theory was first advanced that Wladislas, who was now the archetypal warrior-martyr of the Polish national struggle, did not in fact perjure himself in 1444. Hunyadi was likewise transformed into the epitome of a Hungarian national hero. His person was claimed by Serbian and Romanian historians as well. Despite the nationalistic tendencies of nineteenth century historiography great advances were made in the publication of source material, in particular the documents and letters mentioned above.[25] This paved the way for twentieth century historians, who were able to draw on far more sources than their predecessors.

The most significant twentieth-century historian of the conflict in question was the relatively unknown (outside of Poland) Jan Dąbrowski. The predecessor of my own advisor, Prof. Baczkowski, Dąbrowski was the most accomplished historian of late medieval Polish history in the early twentieth century. He was also a specialist in Polish-Hungarian relations. In 1922

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[24] For example the English pamphlet *The Jesuits' Ghost*, written by an anonymous author in 1689. It attributes Murad's victory to Wladislas' perjury and Cesarini's presumptions regarding absolution.

[25] A landmark was the publication of the Romanian historian Nicolae Jorga's multi-volume Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle. Despite the work's editorial shortcomings, its publication rendered a trove of new documents accessible to historians of the period.

he wrote the definitive book on King Wladislas' four-year reign in Hungary.[26] It still stands as the best study of that topic.[27] Despite its thematic focus the book contains much on the Turco-Hungarian conflict, inarguably Wladislas' major foreign policy concern during his reign. Attempts by other twentieth-century Polish historians to improve on Dąbrowski's work, despite being accomplished historians themselves, have proved in large part fruitless. This is more a testament to Dąbrowski's exhaustive efforts than their own failings.

Prior to writing Dąbrowski headed a team of Polish academics who scoured the archives in Venice, Poland, and above all Hungary, compiling documentary evidence. Aside from these, he made greater use of recently published materials. As he wrote in his introduction:

> I have also tried to use published foreign sources on the subject to a greater extent than has been done up to now. The number of these has significantly increased in recent years thanks to new publications. I have gained much as well by referring to earlier published sources which have been up to now ignored by Polish historiography—such as the chronicle of Jehan de Wavrin. This is also true of Turkish sources which were made available to me by the outstanding publications of Thury,[28] and which have been partially used by Polish historians.
>
> The source material which I possessed enabled not only a more accurate rendering of the actual development and sequence of events, but also their clarification in a way which differs in more than one instance from some of the conclusions thus far reached by Polish historians.[29]

Almost ninety years after the publication of his work a similar situation exists. Much has been written since 1922 on Varna and the Turco-Hungarian

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[26] Jan Dąbrowski, *Władysław I Jagiellończyk na Węgrzech* (*1440–1444*), Rozprawy Historyczne Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego, vol. II, part 1, 1922. Reprint, Vienna: Wiener Neudrucke, 1971.

[27] Since only translated Hungarian works are available to me, I cannot make this statement unequivocally in regards to other untranslated works in Hungarian on the subject. Certainly Dąbrowski's monograph outshines in depth and breadth all other works regarding the political history of Hungary and Poland for these four years, and is one of the standard works for understanding the conflict with the Ottomans. Edward Potkowski's *Warna 1444* (Warsaw: Bellona, 2004), Wincenty Swoboda's work of the same title (Wincenty Swoboda, *Warna 1444, Dzieje narodu i państwa polskiego* nr.13 (Krakow: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza,1994) and Karol Olejnik's recent biography of Wladislas (*Władysław III Warneńczyk* (Krakow: Universitas, 2007)) are all primarily based off Dąbrowski, though they include some recent scholarship. See my discussion below.

[28] A Hungarian historian who published a number of Turkish sources relevant to the period, with translation, found in J. Thúry, *Török történetírók*. Vols I–II (Budapest: 1893, 1896).

[29] Dąbrowski's introduction, pp. VI-VII.

conflict from 1438–1444. There have been several book-length treatments of the Varna crusade, the most significant being the works of Bistra Cvetkova and Edward Potkowski.[30] Yet these book-length publications failed to take into account the recent publication of significant new source material, most importantly Ottoman works many of which have only been published or discovered in the last few decades.

The appearance of a larger number of Ottoman sources is due in large part to the revival of Turkish historiography in the twentieth century. Previously historians were forced to rely on rather selective and uncritical Latin translations of original Ottoman works, such as Leonclavius' *Historiae Musulmanae Turcorum, de monumentis ipsorum* written in 1591, or Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* published in ten volumes between 1827 and 1835. Even József Thúry's late-nineteenth century Hungarian translations of Ottoman sources, which Dąbrowski relied on in his work, seems from my limited perspective as leaving much to be desired.[31] Though these authors did a great deal to introduce Turkish sources to historians their works were not on par with western critical editions of historical sources published throughout the nineteenth century. In the first half of the twentieth century Friedrich Giese and Franz Babinger were important pioneers in the publication of quality critical editions of Ottoman sources. Their efforts were soon taken up by native Turkish historians, who through the *Türk Tarih Kurumu* publishing house have greatly increased not only the number of available sources but the quality of previously published material with newer, more critical editions.

The most significant find of twentieth century historiography in regards to the conflict described herein is without doubt the anonymous *Gazavât-ı Sultan Murad b. Mehemmed Han*.[32] For the years 1443–1444 it even outstrips

[30] Bistra Cvetkova, *La Bataille Memorable des Peuples* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1971). The French edition is a translation from the original Bulgarian. Edward Potkowski, *Warna 1444* (Warsaw: Bellona, 2004). These works do not cover precisely the same period as this work.

[31] Since I cannot read the Hungarian translation I base this comment off passages quoted from Thury I have seen in other sources, i.e. Dąbrowski and Joseph Held, *Hunyadi: legend and reality*, East European Monographs 178 (New York: Distributed by Columbia University, 1985). For example a footnote found in Joseph Held's work (*Hunyadi*, p. 222) contains the following passage: "Seadeddin (Thury, 1:133) called him Kule Sahin, 'the Brown Falcon,' adding mischievously that he was also called the gelded Sehabeddin Pasha." These seem to be appalling mistranslations of the words "*kule*" (meaning a slave of the sultan), "*Şahin*," a common shortening of his proper name Şehabeddin, and "*Hadım*," which does indeed mean "gelded" but rather refers to his status as a eunuch. It was a title of honor, certainly not one of ridicule. If Thury did indeed translate it in the manner Held's passage suggests, then one has to call into question other parts of Thury's translations as well.

[32] Hereafter referred to as simply the Gazavât.

Długosz in terms of length and accuracy of narrative. This source was first mentioned by Halil İnalcik and M. Oghuz in an article in 1948.[33] İnalcik analyzed the source in greater detail in his 1954 book *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar*.[34] He even provided a small fragment of the text in an appendix. There was no critical edition of the work published, however, until 1978. Even then, this source, which is the most lengthy and arguably most significant source for the conflict from 1443–1444 has been little used by western historians of the last thirty years. This is primarily on account of language—the work is written in Ottoman Turkish. To give an extent of the ignorance surrounding this source one can point to a passage in the relatively recent six-volume *A History of the Crusades* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), edited by the respected historian of the late crusading era Kenneth M. Setton, which claims to be "the definitive history of the crusades." On a footnote on the very first page (vol. VI, p. 277) of a rather lengthy chapter about the wars of the 1440s the author writes: "The Ottoman sources for this period are sparse, and those which speak of Varna add relatively little." Even without the Gazavât this would be a highly questionable statement.

In 2006, while already in the process of researching this work, Colin Imber published an English translation of the *Gazavât* along with several other sources on the history of the Varna crusade.[35] This will no doubt increase its accessibility to current and future historians. At the same time modern Turkish historians have added greatly to the secondary literature by analyzing these events from an Ottoman perspective with a deep understanding of the culture and institutions of the time. Halil İnalcik ranks first and foremost among these researchers. Though sometimes criticized by Balkan historians for being too sympathetic to the Ottoman perspective, I find such comments to reflect chauvinism on the part of the former rather than the latter. Like Dąbrowski, İnalcik's use of the available source material is equal parts judicious, creative and exhaustive.

Numerous other sources have also appeared in the last several decades. A whole series of documents concerning the Council of Florence were published in critical editions by the mid-twentieth century and were behind Joseph Gill's comprehensive *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge:

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[33] Halil İnalcik, M. Oğuz, *Yeni bulunmuş bir Gazavât-ı sultan Murad*, AÜDTCFD, VII/2 (Ankara: 1949), pp. 481–495.

[34] Halil İnalcik, *Fatih Devri Üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kürümü, 1954).

[35] Colin Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006).

1959). Though Gill's book has a papal bias, his work is moderated by other treatments of the subject such as Gerald Christianson's *Cesarini: the Conciliar Cardinal* (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1979). A good deal of research has also been done on Late Medieval Crusading. Norman Housley's work *The Later crusades, 1274 -1580: from Lyons to Alcazar* deserves specific mention, and his works help in determining Varna's place in the larger theme of later crusades.

A significant chapter in twentieth century historiography of the conflict is the controversy surrounding the ten-year truce between Murad and Wladislas and the so-called Act of Szeged. Discussion over this issue produced a flurry of writings, some of them from Dąbrowski himself. The debate was sparked in the late 1930s when Oskar Halecki re-introduced the theory that Wladislas had not in fact ratified the Ottoman treaty and therefore not perjured himself prior to the battle. This argument was refuted by others, among them Dąbrowski, who saw in Halecki's arguments a nationalistic and pro-Catholic bias that led him to ignore more apparent explanations. Francisc Pall's re-discovery of Ciriacus of Ancona's correspondence regarding the negotiations of 1444 played a central role in this debate, and inspired Pall to continue his research into other aspects of the conflict. The debate is still very much alive today (See chapter seven).

Other sources published in recent decades include the Byzantine *Kleinchroniken*, the Ottoman *Takvimler* or historical lists and the *Annals of Murad II*. Critical editions of the histories of the Ottoman historians Oruç Bey, Neşri, Aşıkpaşazade and others have likewise been published. The recent re-discovery of Zaifi's *Gazavât* is of great significance, and it is hoped that a general publication of this work will soon appear. French historian Jacques Paviot has produced two books that contain excellent assessments of Philip the Good's fleet and his involvement in crusading, to include Varna. The original Czech edition of Konstantin Mihalović's *Memoires of a Janissary* was also unearthed and relatively recently re-published with an accompanying English translation.[36] The list goes on (see the bibliography at the end of this book).[37]

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[36] Until relatively recently the only published, critical edition of this text was the Polish edition of Łoś. Most scholars concede that the Polish text was written after the Czech version, and that the Czech manuscript is in fact the original. The Polish version differs from the Czech text in a number of places and is somewhat corrupted in terms of person and place names.

[37] See the bibliography at the end of this work for a more comprehensive list of relatively recently published source material.

Purpose and Scope

In my research I have analyzed over 400 documents, i.e. letters, manifestos, records of sale, proclamations, reports, etc. In addition I have pored over nearly a dozen full-length chronicles or accounts, distributed equally among Christian and Muslim authors. Up to now there has been no general monographic work on these events to draw on such a comprehensive range of previously published and recently appearing primary sources.[38] Much of this has to do with the diverse linguistic range of the texts. In order of precedence the relevant languages for the primary sources are: Medieval and Renaissance Latin, Ottoman Turkish, Byzantine Greek, Late Medieval French, Late Medieval Czech, Late Middle High German, Medieval Italian (various dialects), Persian, Arabic, Old Serbian, and Late Medieval Polish.[39] Much of the primary literature regarding these events has not been translated.[40] This has forced scholars to rely on second-hand information con-

[38] Cvetkova's above-cited work, *La Bataille Memorable des Peuples*, is perhaps the closest attempt. The author did not have access to all the primary source material, in particular to a full edition of the Gazavât. Yet the greatest problem with Cvetkova's work is its highly tendentious and nationalistic tone. In the spirit of earlier nineteenth century historiography she saw the conflict as one between the Balkan peoples and their erstwhile oppressors, the Ottoman Turks. This agenda determines her narrative and distorts her portrayal of events. Although replete with citations and references she writes more in the dramatic, emotional style of a historical publicist than an academic historian. I also have the impression that despite her numerous citations she failed to consult the sources frequently while writing. This caused several important errors in the book, for example her statement that the main battle in 1443 took place at Hadrian's Gates and not the Zlatitsa Pass. Her work, along with Dąbrowski's, provided much of the basis for the other full-length narrative of these events recently undertaken, Edward Potkowski's *Warna 1444* (Warsaw: Bellona, 2004). Though well-written, the book nevertheless offers little not already found in the other two works, and relies mostly on secondary sources. The same is true of Karol Olejnik's recently re-issued full-length biography of Wladislas: *Wladyslaw III Warnenczyk: 1424–1444*, Krakow: Universitas, 2007. In recent decades there have also been several important works on Hunyadi. These understandably tend to focus on the entirety of his career of which the years 1440–1444 were only one part. The first part of İnalcik's *Fatih Devri* is likewise significant. But although İnalcik is a master of Ottoman sources and has an excellent familiarity with other western secondary literature he seems to have little proficiency with the source material in Latin.

[39] This refers only to the Polish edition of Konstantin Mihalović's memoirs, which were released around the same time as the Czech edition but believed by many to be a translation of the latter. (Jan Łoś, *Pamiętniki Janczara*, Krakow: Akademia Umiejętności, 1912.)

[40] Even Imber's recent book of translated source material mentioned above (*The Crusade of Varna, 1443–1444*), although a step in a positive direction, comes nowhere near to translating the available material. Absent in particular are the rich epistolary sources in Latin. In addition, the book, which was not intended as a monograph, has little in the way of introductory or critical remarks accompanying the sources.

tained in scholarly books and articles to bridge linguistic gaps. I have been able to access, in their original, works in all of the above languages save Byzantine Greek and Persian.[41] This has allowed me to conduct a complete reassessment of the events described based on a side-by-side comparison of primary sources. Most of these sources were composed independent of one another, and by comparing them directly with one another the historian is able to confirm, complement and call into question parts of an account mentioned in other sources. The result, I believe, is a narrative of events far fuller and more accurate than any yet published.

Though striving to abide by the maxim *ad fontes* wherever and whenever possible, I have by no means neglected the books and articles comprising the secondary literature. Numerous works have been written in the last hundred years on topics relevant to these events. There have been significant contributions from Hungarian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbian, Polish, French, Italian, German and Turkish authors, with a spate of articles and books discussing the topic from a number of other countries as well.[42] Though I have been able to access much of this secondary literature there are still important gaps in research. The most significant of these is Hungarian. Though the relevant fifteenth-century Hungarian sources are in Latin, I have been unable to access a good deal of the modern Hungarian books and articles. The problem is mitigated somewhat by the availability of many of the more prominent Hungarian works in Polish, English, German or French translations. Dąbrowski's own exhaustive exploration of Hungarian source material, though somewhat outdated, has been my other great pillar of reliance. A similar problem exists for me in regard to Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Albanian and Greek books and articles.[43]

Although the detailed scholarship contained in these secondary works has been useful in elucidating specific aspects of the conflict, there have

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[41] Almost all of the Greek chronicles have been translated into Latin or even relatively recent English critical editions. One major exception is Paraspondylos, whose heretofore untranslated work (which is of questionable historical value) I was able to access with the help of a friend. The major Persian sources are the fethname issued by Murad, one of which has been translated by Imber, and the poem of Kaşifi. Kaşifi's work is described in relative detail by Pehlivan. Full of exaggerations and and at times pure fantasy it seems to be of relatively little historical worth in regards to the events herein described, and only follows the general outlines of the established narrative which the author likely gleaned from one of the other above-mentioned sources.

[42] Greek, British, American and Russian to name a few.

[43] Regarding the Byzantine historians most of their works have accompanying translations in Latin or have been entirely translated into English, German, etc. One important exception is Paraspondylos, as mentioned above.

been very few attempts at a full treatment of the subject.[44] Any such attempt needs to likewise incorporate a broader and more in-depth examination of this secondary source material. Though it is important, for instance, to understand the specific tactical maneuvers and military outcomes of Şehabeddin's defeat in 1442, it is also important to understand the general trends of Ottoman military conquest in the fifteenth century, and to look in-depth at the political and social motivations driving Ottoman warfare at that time. Such topics fulfill and complement one another, and their treatment side-by-side yields different insights than their separate analysis. Specific examples illustrate the larger themes, and larger themes provide depth and understanding to the specific events. The aim of this work is to undertake such a comparative analysis, encompassing far more primary sources than any previous work and interpreting them with reference to the vast secondary literature that has appeared in the last century. The pages that follow speak to the results of this endeavor.

The Balkan conflict from 1438–1444 is ideal for exploring the relationship between politics, warfare and religion in late medieval Central Europe and the Balkans. To what extent were these political conflicts, and to what extent religious? Were they holy wars or political wars? It is tempting to write that they were more political conflicts heavily influenced by religion, than religious conflicts influenced by politics. Certainly reasons of state interest played a far greater role than, say, during the First Crusade. But this had more to do with the changed nature of the late medieval state than a retrogression of popular piety. In any case this sort of statement is dangerously misleading. It is impossible to say where politics began and religion ended, and the actors themselves seem to have drawn no such lines. The best one can answer is that it depends on which party is under discussion, and at which point in the conflict. Would the Venetians have contributed to the fleet in 1444 if they had not stood to make clear political gains? Probably not. But one can rephrase the question, and ask if the Venetians would have joined the fight if they were a Muslim, and not a Christian power. This latter question seems at first absurd. Had Venice been a Muslim state, the entire political make-up of the Mediterranean would have been different. But this alone speaks to the importance of religion. Notions of Christendom and the Abode of Islam are essential to understanding fifteenth-century politics. As Norman Housley writes regarding Christendom:

[44] See footnote above.

"Indeed, it is arguable that the concept of Christendom, the first to take shape among the various preconditions for the crusading movement, was also the last to vanish. Its chief manifestation was an a priori hostile view of the Turks, and the welcoming of their defeat, even when it was accomplished by a power which would normally, for political and religious reasons, be viewed with suspicion."[45] The opposite was true as well, and traitors to the religious communities on both sides were ill regarded and ostracized. It may be for this reason that such states were in the end unsuccessful in building an independent position for themselves as regional powers. The Genoese are a clear example of this on the Christian side. Ibrahim Bey, the Prince of Karaman, played an identical role within Islam.

Other examples support the important role of religion in the conflict. Wladislas' own decision to go to war in 1444 seems to have had more to do with the religious influence of Cardinal Cesarini than the political interests of Hungary. And what of the Duchy of Burgundy, whose involvement in the crusade brought her no political gain or loss, but was motivated almost entirely by ideals of religious and dynastic traditions? The question of which was more important, religion or politics, defies easy explanation. It can only be hoped that by the end of this work the reader has a clearer understanding of the interplay of these two factors in fifteenth-century inter-faith warfare, through the example of one of its most significant conflicts.

The abundant source material made it possible to focus my exploration of these themes on a relatively brief period of six years—from the death of Sigismund of Luxembourg until Wladislas' death at Varna, i.e. 1438–1444. These years are tied together by a consistent narrative arc. Though Ottoman foreign policy began to shift around 1435/36 they did not begin their campaign of expansion in earnest until 1438, the year in which Murad himself conducted the largest raid on Hungary in living memory and laid the groundwork for the conquest of Serbia. The latter took place in 1439, along with the union of the Eastern and Western Churches and an intensified effort on the part of the papacy to launch an anti-Ottoman crusade. 1440 saw the first Ottoman setback at Belgrade and the election of Wladislas to the Hungarian throne, in itself a response to Ottoman aggression. From 1440–1442 the tide began to turn, until in the beginning of 1443 when the Hungarians were ready to take the offensive. The Long March and its qualified successes brought hope not only to the Balkans but all of Christendom.

[45] Housley, *The Later Crusades*, p. 454.

Silesia
Prague
KINGDOM OF BOHEMIA
Krakow
KINGDOM OF POLAND
Lithuania
Moravia
HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE
Vienna
Bratislava
Danube
Buda
Hapsburg Territories
KINGDOM OF HUNGARY
Oradea
Moldavia
Szeged
Transylvania
REPUBLIC OF VENICE
Venice
Belgrade
Golubac
Turnu Severin
Smederevo
Targoviste
Wallachia
Bosnia
Despotate of
Vidin
Danube
Sarajevo
Stalac
Giurgiu
Split
Krusevac
Nicopolis
Adriatic
Sea

Map 1. The Balkans and the Aegean in 1437.

These hopes were dashed on the battlefield at Varna in 1444 with the defeat of the crusader army and the death of King Wladislas.[46]

Not only within Christendom, but within the Ottoman Empire there is a thematic consistency to these years. The Ottoman energy and vigor harnessed by the Porte's expansionist policy from 1438 to 1439 is palpable in the sources. Murad seemed not only well on his way to regaining Bayezid's empire but pushing the borders even further. Yet beginning at Belgrade and continuing through 1442 an infectious doubt and despair grew after the sultan's armies suffered defeat after major defeat. The problem manifested itself in, and was itself the result of, friction at court between the "peace party" and the "war hawks." By the autumn of 1444 visible cracks were beginning to appear in the seemingly indomitable House of Osman, with outbreaks of revolt and insurrection not only among the empire's vassals and dependencies, but within the very capital itself. The Ottomans were thrown off balance and forced to react to events they themselves did not direct, but which were clearly being determined by their Christian rivals, a situation they had not experienced since their entry into Europe nearly a century prior. This dynamic was decisively eradicated at Varna. Turkish dominance in the Balkans was firmly re-established; the Ottomans regained the offensive initiative. This fact of Balkan politics would not be called into question again for centuries.

This final outcome was in its simplest sense the result of decisions made by Murad and Wladislas in the afternoon of November 10th at Varna. Yet the considerations weighed in making those decisions were, as mentioned above, both the product of previous years' events and the religious, military and political context in which those events occurred. The following chapters, it is hoped, will elucidate both the events and their context such that the historical phenomena of 1438–1444 seem understandable, even if at times they defy familiarity.

[46] Długosz (p. 306) sums up this sentiment in the summer of 1444 quite nicely: "presertim cum spes haud dubia fuerit non ea solum, que Turcus redditurus erat, sed universam Europam recuperari et Turcum ultra mare redigi posse et sempiterno illo gloriari triumpho."

PART ONE
THE CONFLICT TO 1440 AND ITS CONTEXT

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHURCH, THE COUNCIL AND THE CRUSADE

Defining Crusade

The wars of 1438–1444 were for both sides political and religious in nature. For the Ottomans they were part of the ongoing غزاة (*ghaza*) or جهاد (*jihad*), and for the Christians the anti-Ottoman struggle was bound by the conceptual framework of crusade.[1] The term crusade is as loaded in meaning as its Muslim counterpart—jihad. For historical purposes the meaning of crusade can be limited to several conflicting definitions.[2] The 'traditionalist' school sees crusades "as only those expeditions which were launched with the intent of defending or recovering the Holy Land. Pluralists, by contrast, look for papal validation, the granting of crusade status, preaching and evidence of recruitment."[3] It is disingenuous to argue that the Christian offensives in the Balkans of the 1440s had the liberation of Jerusalem as their ultimate goal. Despite the attempts of some fifteenth-century propagandists to sell the expeditions as such (see below), those most intimately involved, including the papacy, saw the expeditions as an attempt to liberate the Balkan Christians from the "infidel yoke." This was at times stated explicitly, for example in the so-called Act of Szeged of 1444. If the endeavor proved successful then perhaps a future expedition against Jerusalem could be planned. But there was no initial planning or provision made for the reconquest of Jerusalem, and it is doubtful that had the army succeeding in driving the Ottomans into Asia that it would have pursued them there afterwards.

The expeditions in question therefore fit the pluralist definition, for though they did not have Jerusalem as their object, they met the other institutional criteria described above. Even this is more complicated than it may at first seem. Only the Long March of 1443 and the Varna expedition of 1444 were officially promulgated as crusades, complete with papal bulls,

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[1] See the next chapter for a more in-depth discussion of ghaza and jihad.

[2] For a thorough treatment of historiographical definitions of crusade see Norman Housley, *Contesting the Crusades* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

[3] Housley, *The Later Crusades*, p. 2.

the collection of tithes, etc.[4] What of the remaining conflict? Can Hunyadi's victories in 1441 and 1442 be considered "crusades" as well? What of the raid on Kruševac in 1437? On the one hand these expeditions enjoyed institutional support. Despite the fact that there was no official papal bull naming these campaigns crusades, they were still supported by the papacy in terms of recruitment and the granting of indulgences to participants. Certain financial privileges were given the Hungarian Church, and the papacy encouraged crusade preaching in the kingdom throughout this period. Emeric Marczaly's letter to a Hungarian priest after the raid in Kruševac in 1437[5] for example, suggests not only active recruitment on the part of the priest, but that some sort of indulgence or other benefice was offered to the raiders. In other words, the border struggle with the Ottomans in the Balkans, much like the *reconquista* in Spain, was an ongoing holy war, sanctioned and promoted by the Church.

All of this indicates that although these crusades are more easily encompassed by the pluralist definition, there are important qualifications which must be kept in mind. Contemporaries saw these wars as part of the ongoing conflict with Islam, and Europe received news of Hunyadi's victories in 1442 with far more ecstasy than, say, of the Teutonic Knights' earlier victories over the Samogitians. This was not simply because the Turks posed a greater threat to Europe than the Samogitians. War against the Muslim Turks fit more precisely into a long and powerful crusading tradition. It must be remembered that if any particular nation were the target of propaganda surrounding the First Crusade it was the Turks, not Arabs. Of course, a more important factor than nationality was religion. The fact of several centuries of direct Muslim-Christian conflict colored sentiments toward other Muslim powers such as the Ottomans, using terms such as "sarracen" that directly tied the Ottomans to the enemies of earlier crusades. The term Ottoman itself was unknown to contemporary Europeans, who mostly referred to the enemy as "Turk," "infidel," or "sarracen," refuting the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the empire, but reinforcing ties to earlier Muslim-Christian conflicts.

Adherents of the pluralist school of crusading pay close attention to ecclesiastical involvement, since their definition of crusade is in essence a canonical one. They are often criticized for focusing too much on the institution, and less on the faith and zeal which drove the institutions and the

[4] For this reason, during those two expeditions, I refer to the soldiers involved as "crusaders," though I shy away from this usage when discussing the other conflicts.

[5] See chapter three.

crusaders themselves. This same pluralist bias is reflected in this work. A larger exploration of the individual convictions of the fifteenth-century Balkan crusaders and their Ottoman counterparts could serve as its own topic for a book. In the interests of abridging an already lengthy discussion I have chosen to focus largely on the politico-institutional dimensions of religion, touching on more emotional aspects only tangentially. I also believe this to be sound prioritizing. The politico-religious backdrop within the institutional Church was of the utmost importance to the course of events. The goal of this chapter is to adequately describe this backdrop.

By the late 1430s the political atmosphere within the Church, particularly the relationship between pope and council and Latin and Orthodox Christendom, combined to create an ecclesiastical context in which an anti-Ottoman crusade was not only desirable but politically urgent. There are three important premises underlying this thesis. First, that the Byzantines and in particular John VIII sought union with the West above all to ward off the Turkish threat to the remainder of their empire. Many historians of the council of Ferrara/Florence focus on the doctrinal differences and how they were resolved. I argue that these were secondary, i.e. doctrinal obstacles that needed to be handled in the proper manner and with due respect, but which were destined to be overcome from the moment the decision to hold a joint council was reached. In short, John VIII and other pro-Western Byzantines needed the union because they saw Western military support as the only means to rid themselves of the existential problem posed by Ottoman expansion.

The second premise is that Eugene IV, who faced an opposing and eventually schismatic council at Basel saw the union as a way to bolster his status vis à vis this council. By resolving the Great Schism that had split Christianity for almost 500 years, he would demonstrate to the Princes of Christendom that the papacy was the incontestable head of the Church. The council had foreseen this strategy and adopted it as well. Both parties worked feverishly to attract the Byzantines to their camp. Lastly, the promises Eugene IV had made to John VIII before, during and after the council of Ferrara/Florence regarding Western assistance and in particular an anti-Ottoman crusade had been made with sincerity. Eugene worked earnestly from at least 1437 but particularly after the union in 1439 to bring about a crusade. Although his plans fell victim to developments within Europe and the Church, he did not renounce the idea, as later developments in 1442–1444 make clear. Yet these later developments can only be understood in light of Eugene IV's earlier commitments, and the relationship between Byzantium and Rome and Rome and the council.

Eugene IV, Cardinal Cesarini and the Council of Basel

Conciliarism, which holds that councils of the Church hold ultimate sway over matters of the faith, eclipsing even the papacy, reached its fullest development in the chaotic years of the Great Western Schism in which two, eventually three, popes claimed the See of Saint Peter. It was the council, called and in part presided over by Sigismund of Luxembourg, which resolved this situation and restored order to the Church. Yet the council did not merely relinquish its hard-won prerogatives. Under the conciliar bull *Frequens* the council required the newly-elected Martin V to agree to a number of provisions establishing the conciliar doctrine. One of these provisions stated that a general council of the Church should be convened five years after Constance, and then seven years after that. The purpose of this, of course, was to ensure the survival of the conciliar movement. As the papal historian Ludwig von Pastor wrote: "In a council one saw the panacea for all problems under which Christendom was suffering. Earlier, the unholy schism had been successfully resolved by a council. Nothing would seem more fitting, than to once again take recourse to this institution in light of the necessary ecclesiastical reforms."[6]

Martin had dutifully called another council in 1424, but this was soon uprooted and aborted on account of the plague and for other, more ambiguous reasons. Martin, of course, had no interest in convening a body whose very existence compromised and posed a threat to his own authority. Contrary to the conciliarists, supporters of papal primacy argued that the pope's authority was derived from Christ, not the council. They believed that to subordinate the papacy to a council meant that soon bishops would be subordinate to their parish priests, and parish priests subordinate to a council of parishioners. In short, conciliarism did nothing more than upend the very church which Christ himself had instituted.

Both sides saw the other as inefficient and ridden with corruption, driven by self-interest and aggrandizement rather than the interests of the Church. If the other side should win, Christendom would descend into chaos and corruption. The only real solution was to weaken the papacy, and for the papacy, of course, the solution was to rid itself of the usurping and heavy-handed council. Cesarini, who would preside in Basel for the next seven years, would try and move beyond the entrenched positions of either side and champion the validity of both. His ultimate hope was to

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[6] Ludwig Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der Renaissance bis zur Wahl Pius II*, vol. 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder & Co. G.m.b.h. Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1925), p. 300.

attend to those issues for which the council was called in the first place, i.e. to further reform within the church, to uproot heresy and to maintain the peace and unity of Christendom. In the end, it was the issue of unity with Byzantium and the Eastern Churches which ended this stalemate, as well as this issue's important corollary: the anti-Turkish crusade.

In any case Martin V was obliged to call a council. It was agreed that it should take place in Basel, a city independent of the papacy or any other European monarch. One wonders if Martin V had carefully laid plans to scuttle this assembly as well. If he did, they were never realized, for he died before the proceedings were underway (20 February 1431). His successor, a 48-year-old Venetian named Gabriele Condulmer, agreed along with the other candidates to grant certain concessions before the election even took place. These concessions were designed to reduce the power of the papacy and its leverage over the College of Cardinals.[7] In this way, the election of Condulmer was little different than the election of the various monarchs of Central Europe, i.e. Poland, Hungary, or the Holy Roman Empire, where the magnates would play the role of the cardinals and the king the role of the pope.

Condulmer, having granted these concessions, was duly elected as Pope Eugene IV. Eugene IV was something of a contrast to his predecessor Martin V, who had angered the clergy through rampant nepotism and other questionable practices. Eugene's character was marked by a monkish, almost ascetic demeanor that flies in the face of the popular conception of the Renaissance papacy as a series of dilettante materialists. He was tall, handsome, yet gaunt and grave. Indeed, Eugene IV seemed to embody the conception of what a devout pope should be. As Piccolomini wrote, "He was possessed of a great gravity and his expression exuded majesty. The very face itself called to mind a pontiff."[8] Though austere in his person he was quite generous to others, a fact which caused consternation among officials in the treasury. Though Eugene was not fond of frequent appearances, his powerful presence could arouse tears among the public. Vespasiano da Bisticci offers the following anecdote:

> I remember once, when Pope Eugene was in Florence, at the time of his exile, that he stood on a podium next to the entrance of St. Maria Novella, while the people who filled the square and the neighboring streets silently gazed upon him. As soon as the pope began with the 'Adiutorium nostrum in nomine Domini' one heard throughout the entire plaza only loud sobbing,

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[7] For the details of these concessions, see Pastor, p. 296.

[8] Wolkan, vol. II, p. 246; as found in Pastor, p. 297.

> so overpowering was the impression of the majesty and piety of the Representative of Christ, which in truth then appeared the same as the one he represented.[9]

If the cardinals had taken Eugene IV's austerity and reticence as a sign of weakness in worldly affairs, they were sorely mistaken. The pope was possessed of a stubbornness and strength of will quite in keeping with his character, and he only made concessions to the council when there was no other recourse to be had.

After his election, Eugene IV confirmed Cardinal Julian Cesarini as his legate and president at Basel. This choice was essential to the future development of events. Over the next several years this prelate would steer a course between papal tyranny and radical conciliarism that avoided a break in the church at least until such a time as union could be achieved between the Orthodox Eastern and Latin Western churches. Cesarini was born in 1398 to a modest Roman family. He was quickly marked out for a life of study, eventually attending Rome, Perugia, Bologna and Padua, "where he outshone all his peers."[10] In the 1420s he entered the service of Cardinal Branda de Castiglione, whom he accompanied on his mission to Bohemia. There Branda quickly recognized his protégé's abilities, and enlisted his help in inciting the German nobility to take up arms against the Hussites. Cesarini's oratorical talents played a key role as the two criss-crossed Germany, drumming up support through preaching and discussion, and winning over in debate those who might sympathize with the Hussites.[11] Cesarini won his cardinal's hat soon afterward, and spent time at the papal court working with Martin V on issues of church reform.

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[9] Also found in Pastor, p. 297.

[10] G.F. Poggio Bracciolini, "Poggii Florentini oratio in funere reverendissimi cardinalis D. Iuliani de Caesarinis Romani Legati contra Turcos, et in ea expeditione diem functi," in Spicilegium Romanum, ed. Cardinal Angelo Mai, vol. X, 373–384 (Rome: Typis Collegii Urbani, 1844), p. 376: "... in quibus omnes suae aetatis condiscipulos excessit." He later taught law at Padua for two years, where Nicholas of Cusa and Dominique Capranica were among his students. He and Cusa later became friends, and Cusa dedicated his work, *De docta ignorantia* to Cesarini. For more on these relationships, see Heinrich Fechner, *Giuliano Cesarini (1398–1444) Bis zu seiner Ankunft in Basel am 9. September 1431* (Berlin, 1907), pp. 27–41.

[11] About this period, Poggio (p. 377) writes: "Ad omnia agenda Iuliani consilium et doctrina exquirebatur: nihil recte actum putabatur, in quo illius prudentia defuisset: singula solus obibat. Ad diversos principes missus, omnes pro fide in suam sententiam traxit." See also Fechner, pp. 45–46.

In 1431 the pope appointed Cesarini as leader of the planned crusade against the Hussites. This was despite the failed attempts of Cardinal Beaufort in 1427 and Cesarini's own previous failure, along with Branda, in 1423–24. Cesarini's long experience with the Hussite affair no doubt made him an ideal candidate to head the expedition.[12] He began his work in January at the imperial diet in Nuremberg, whence in early spring he traveled to the Rhineland, recruiting and preaching, receiving promises of men and money. While on this promotion campaign he also traveled to Liège, ostensibly to assist in negotiations between the local bishop and Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. Cesarini used the occasion to obtain a promise from the duke of support for the crusade.[13] Cesarini had no doubt encountered the duke's men previously in his legations to France and England in 1425. He knew quite well that Philip wanted a crown, and hoped to advance the prestige of his duchy and dynasty via crusading. As he had done on numerous occasions, however, the duke promised support but then later reneged, citing mitigating circumstances. Among these circumstances was Philip the Good's conflict with the Duke of Bar. This meant that the latter, as well as his supporter the Prince of the Palatinate, declined to participate so as to ready their forces for the coming war against one another.

The Duke of Burgundy was not the only one to go back on his word. Despite the sizeable host raised by Cesarini, the cardinal was deeply dissatisfied with the quality and readiness of the army. So were the princes, who seemed to have doubts about the entire expedition. He believed, however, that faith and zeal could overcome any military deficiencies. Experience proved otherwise. After a brief march into enemy territory the crusaders, employing their own tabor or wagenburg, laid siege to Domažlice. The Hussites soon arrived under the command of the much-feared Prokop Velky. Cesarini went to the top of a hill to watch the battle unfold. There, he witnessed the painstakingly assembled army, which was under his nominal leadership, collapse[14] the moment they heard the rumble of the

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[12] See Fechner, pp. 74–90 and Christianson, pp. 17–26.

[13] For a description of Philip the Good's policy towards the Hussite crusades, see Jacques Paviot, *Les ducs de Bourgogne, la croisade et l'Orient* (*fin XIVe siècle—XV siècle*) (Paris: Sorbonne, 2003), pp. 67–72. He writes the following about the Duke and the Hussite crusade as a vehicle for his royal ambitions: "Philip the Good never intervened in the struggle against the Hussites, giving the overall impression of wanting to highlight his prominence while dreaming of a royal title and to propagate the image of defender of the faith without actually involving himself—although one might see that he was impeded by circumstances."

[14] Poggio, in a letter to Cesarini, sarcastically blamed the fiasco at Domažlice on a lack of wine which led to a deficiency of courage on the part of the Germans. See Fechner, p. 88.

heretic tabor and the Hussite battle hymn. Acting quickly and decisively Cesarini was able to re-assemble a number of the men. His own bodyguard of 300 stood fast. This line, too, soon broke, and his bodyguard, now hopelessly outnumbered, was also overcome. Cesarini barely escaped with his life, losing in the process his golden crosier, his cardinal's hat and cloak.[15]

Historians discussing Cesarini's endeavors to reassemble a crusading coalition from 1442–1444 often forget this earlier episode, from which Cesarini drew a number of important lessons. For one, never place too much faith in the promises of princes. As seen in his experience with the Duke of Burgundy, these would consistently place local political concerns over those of Christendom. These concerns must first be laid to rest before they could in any way be expected to contribute to the crusade. Secondly, quality of troops was as important as quantity. Many of the soldiers involved in the expedition were vassals, performing their duty out of a sense of feudal obligation rather than out of a desire to achieve the stated goal. Having met their obligation in joining the campaign, they took flight at the first hint of real danger. The cardinal gained invaluable experience and insight into what was required to raise, fund, organize, command and successfully operate such a large force. Lastly, he was also able to witness personally the organization and might of the Hussite army. It is no small irony that Cesarini would one day oversee a crusade that employed the tactics of Prokop Velky and had as participants a number of Prokop's former soldiers.

This episode illustrates another important facet of Cesarini's character: his persistence. A day after reaching Nuremberg, when those assembled were still licking the wounds to both their persons and their pride, Cesarini began immediately preaching and organizing another expedition against the Hussites. Though Cesarini was "unfortunate in battle," as Piccolomini would later write, the cardinal possessed an unyielding drive when convinced of his own righteousness. This characteristic would surface repeatedly in the later conflict with the Turks.

Cesarini was anxious after his disastrous defeat to begin work on another expedition. No doubt Eugene IV would have preferred this as well. Yet the council had already begun to assemble. Cesarini had real reason to believe

[15] This scene, in which Cesarini's men are routed and he attempts to rally them despite the forces' collapse is precisely what occurred during the first stages of the battle of Varna. There, however, the cardinal's ability to rally the men and restore some semblance of order to the battle line proved more fruitful and helped prevent a complete collapse of the crusader right flank (see chapter seven).

that through the council he might be able to set aside the sword and successfully resolve the Hussite question through negotiation. This sentiment was reinforced by a Bohemian nobleman who encouraged Cesarini in a letter to travel to the council for precisely this end.[16] It was with this in mind, as well as the enactment of various reforms, that Cesarini traveled to Basel in September 1431. The cardinal was under no illusions, however, about the difficulty of his mission. He knew that he was to be forced to arbitrate between two irreconcilable factions, and that the ominous danger of a schism hung over the Western Church.[17] Yet Cesarini was the ideal man for the job. As Cyriac of Ancona later wrote in 1443 in an entirely different context: "In every undertaking, both in important affairs pertaining to the church of God, and most especially in your well-known reputation for settling numerous differences between foreign peoples, you had always conducted yourself with foresight, steadfastness, justice, loyalty and nobility of spirit."[18] Men trusted his character and they trusted his ability, two necessities for any successful arbitration.

Cesarini's apprehension about the council was soon bolstered by a series of papal decrees that arrived in late 1431 and early 1432. In essence the pope ordered Cesarini to dissolve the assembly. Shocked at the orders, and aware that the assembled church Fathers would explode in anger upon hearing of the bull, he played his hand masterfully. He argued to the council that the pope had either been misinformed or incompletely informed about the council and its activities. At the same time he engaged Eugene IV in an intense correspondence, arguing, pleading and begging with the pope to rescind his decrees. The papacy proved unyielding. Ultimately, Cesarini had to concede that the pope had proved himself unwilling to compromise even where compromise was reasonable, and he increasingly sided with the council. Despite this he never took up with the more radical conciliar and anti-papal elements present at the council, choosing instead to recognize the legitimate role of both the papacy and the council.

It was ultimately outside forces that forced Eugene IV to yield. The anti-papal sentiment at Basel encouraged similar sentiment among secular

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[16] Christianson, p. 26.

[17] Juan de Segovia, *Historia Gestorum Generalis Synodi Basiliensis,* Book XVI. Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium Seculi Decimi Quinti, vol. 2, ed. Rudolph Beer. (Vienna: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1892), pp. 95–107; from Christianson, p. 25.

[18] Ciriaco d'Ancona, Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels, ed. and transl. by Edward Bodnar (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), letter nr. 2, p. 13. Hereafter referred to as "Bodnar."

authorities. No one was happier to indulge in this than Duke Fillipo Maria Visconti of Milan. Visconti saw Eugene IV as a supporter of both Florence and his homeland of Venice. Both of these city-states were at odds with Milan. Visconti thus became the driving force behind attacks on the Papal Estates in 1433 and 1434, on the pretense of championing the rights of the council at Basel. These attacks ultimately resulted in a revolt in Rome (29 May 1434) and the seizure of the city by the condottieri. Eugene fled the city and took refuge in Florence. Faced with such a situation Eugene capitulated to the council on nearly all points.[19] It seemed, at least for the time being, that the conciliarists had won.

The early years of the council gave Cesarini the opportunity to focus on two important issues—the Hussite schism and reform. Reform, though no doubt important, is not directly relevant to our topic. The Hussite matters, however, are worth some mention. For one, the resolution of this seemingly intractable problem through peaceful negotiations demonstrates the cardinal's patience, deftness, and tireless persistence in bringing hostile parties to compromise.[20] These qualities would become important when Cesarini negotiated for union with Byzantium, worked for a truce between the Habsburgs and Jagiellonians, and lobbied for a crusade against the Turks. From a more practical perspective, the Hussite methods of warfare were one of the decisive factors in Hunyadi's success in the years in question. Reconciliation enabled the full participation of former Czech Hussites in anti-Ottoman campaigns from 1437 onwards.

Hussitism began in the pulpit of a preacher of the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague. John Hus, inspired by his English predecessor, Wycliffe, raised invectives against the clergy and the church at large, citing abuses and misuse of Holy Scripture. King Sigismund had Hus burned at Constance, where the preacher had traveled in the hopes of defending his notions. This only inflamed the movement which promulgated Hus' popular theology and ecclesiology among nobles and non-nobles alike, and which expanded well beyond the borders of Bohemia. Among the Hussites' beliefs was an insistence on receiving communion from both the wine and the bread, or both the body and blood of Christ. Hence the chalice displayed on their banners.

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[19] He recognized the council and its place of assembly, retroactively approved all decisions taken, lifted sanctions levied against two cardinals, adopted every word of the text submitted for recognition of the council. Mols, p. 227.

[20] See Christianson, pp. 29–30, 45–51, 117–125

Cesarini hoped the council might accomplish through diplomacy what neither pope nor emperor had accomplished with force. He had begun work on the Hussite problem immediately upon his assumption of the presidency at Basel, and a formal invitation was sent out on 15 October 1431. This step angered the pope, who claimed that he was concerned about the heresy possibly infiltrating and infecting those assembled. There may be some truth to this, especially given the condition the Hussites had set, i.e. that they be allowed to present and debate their views freely and openly with those assembled. But no doubt Eugene IV also knew that the arrival of the Hussites and serious negotiations would make it that much harder to dissolve the council, and would make the council seem an independent authority, capable of resolving important issues of Christendom without recourse to the papacy.[21] As in his other negotiations with the papacy, Cesarini played for time while tirelessly championing his cause.

The Hussites responded to Cesarini's invitation, further encouraged by the cardinal's address in October 1432 to the first two arrivals of the delegation. The main party, however, arrived on a Sunday evening, January 4th, 1433.[22] People thronged the rooftops and streets in expectant curiosity, aroused above all by the arrival of Prokop Velky, the same heretic who had defeated Cesarini and his army only a few months prior, and who had remained unbeaten since. Cesarini had food and wine sent to his new guests, a fact which one chronicler remarked made his guests feel as at home in Basel as in Bohemia.[23] He then greeted them with a charitable welcome speech.

Later, on January 10th, the promised debates began. Cesarini started with what is noted as perhaps one of his "finest speeches ever."[24] Using a combination of arguments bound up both in scripture and the history of the Church, as well as eloquent appeals to human nature, his address brought many to tears. In the final portion of the speech he appeals to the Hussites by invoking the infidel threat. This passage is worth quoting in full, for in combination with the address he gave the Byzantine delegation in 1434 (see below) it gives an idea of how Cesarini, and other churchmen,

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[21] Gill sees the invitation of the Hussites to the council as one of the main affronts to papal authority and reasons for issuing Quoniam Alto. See Gill, *The Council of Florence*, p. 48.

[22] For Piccolomini (Pius II)'s account of this see Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *Historia Bohemica*, ed. Joseph Hejnic (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), chapters 49–50.

[23] Christianson, p. 75.

[24] The speech is in Segovia (*Monumenta Conciliorum*, vol. II, 299–316). For a summary see Christianson, pp. 76–79.

saw the relationship between the unity of Christendom and the infidel threat:

> Look all around you, and see how the people of Christ are trodden upon and devoured by Turks, Saracens and Tartars. Why do you not commiserate with the many thousands of your brothers, who year after year are reduced to the harsh servitude of the infidel? O if you would but listen, when the brigands divide up the spoils of Christendom, how great are their sighs and laments, when the wife is allotted to one person, the husband to another; the father to one, and the son to another; one brother to one, and the other to another. How numerous are their cries, how numerous the whimpering gasps of these, my miserable children, when they are separated from one another, never to see each other again. Who, then, can restrain you from tears? Will you not perhaps desist from fighting each other. But what is more pitiful, is that many of those who are led into captivity, and who are not able to bear such a hard servitude, deny the Catholic faith, and are led to the abhorrent sect of Mohammed. How many kingdoms, provinces, cities, towns are daily seized and depopulated? They have now cornered you in a small area in the west. Little remains, but for them to dispel you from the ends of the earth. By thunder! Why do you not reflect upon the suffering of your mother and your brothers? Why, upon hearing such things, do you wage such cruel war against your own, and spill the blood of your Christian brothers freely and without mercy? Discord among Christians is the cause of all these calamities. If they would only grow wise and harbor love, this sort of persecution would soon end. Never, by any pact, would it be possible for my enemies to defile the sanctuary of the Lord and savage the Catholic people. For what the infidels now do to the Catholics, might the Catholics not do the infidels?"[25]

In this address Cesarini makes the same argument that he will make again to the Byzantines. Discord among Christians has enabled the infidel to lay waste and torment Christendom. Out of a sense of mercy and compassion, the Hussites should rejoin the church, and then the Catholics might do to the infidel what the infidel has done to the Catholics. Just as the Turkish threat is a product of the disunity of Christendom, re-unification is the solution.

All of this is indicative of Cesarini's own views on Christendom, the crusade and Islam. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* defines the first term, Christendom, as follows: "In its wider sense this term is used to describe the part of the world which is inhabited by Christians, as Germany in the Middle Ages was the country inhabited by Germans... But there is a narrower sense in which Christendom stands for a polity as well as a religion,

[25] Ibid., vol. II, p. 315.

for a nation as well as for a people." Cesarini seems also to have embraced these two senses of the term. Many of his contemporaries did as well, evoking solidarity with the plight not only of Christian states but of individual Christians living in Islamic states, and promoting a sense of fellowship between these Christians and the Latin west even when such Christians were widely seen as schismatic or heretical. Though heresy and schism were not to be accepted or tolerated, the main priority was not to eradicate these fellow Christians but to lead them back into the fold. Some even saw Muslims as potentially falling into this category. Cesarini's friend and colleague Nicholas of Cusa, along with John of Segovia, were looking for ways to expand the notion of Christendom to potentially include Islam.[26] Both devoted time to studying the Koran and the tenets of Islam in the hopes of finding some means to bring this about through preaching and conversion. Cesarini did not share their views. He saw the dividing line between Islam and Christendom as a means of promoting unity within the latter.[27] Having achieved this unity, the forces of Christendom could be united to roll back the existential threat posed by Islam and in the end eradicate it altogether.

After his address, Cesarini made good on his word and allowed the Bohemians to speak as long as they wished. The result was "one of the wordiest debates on record."[28] The discussion would go on for months until the Bohemians finally departed in late May. In the end, it seemed that nothing had been resolved. The Bohemians had not converted the assembled Church Fathers to the articles of their faith, and the council had been

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[26] For a broad discussion of these men and their thoughts on Islam see R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Harvard University Press, 1962).

[27] Other influential churchmen at the time shared this sentiment, borrowing from the playbook of Urban II, who thought that the crusade would put an end to internecine fighting and unite the Christian rulers against a common foe. Take, for example, the words of Bartolomeo di Giano from 1438: "When, oh when, therefore, shall these miserable Christians be roused [to action]? When shall that time come? Shall I see it with mine own eyes before I die? This is my hope but it is a very weak one and has truly waned and is now all but despair. Where is the glorious kingdom of the Franks now, which in ancient times drove the Saracens from Hispania? Where is the great power of the English? These two have been consumed [fighting] against one another. Where now is the king of Aragon, terror of the infidel? Where are the other powers and Christian princes? The Germans are hateful to the Hungarians and Bohemians, the Hungarians fight with the Poles. The pastors of the Church are at odds with the pastors, the barons with the barons, and cities use themselves up against other cities, so that even if no other persecution is inflicted from the outside, they are more than enough for their own ruin." (Migne, pp. 1064–1065. The text was translated into English by W.L. North, on whom I rely for the above text.)

[28] Christianson, p. 79.

unable to commit the Hussites to return to orthodoxy. Part of the problem was that the Bohemian camp was itself divided, and the relatively moderate group that appeared at Basel was unable to concede anything on behalf of the Hussite community as a whole. Indeed one of the major differences between the Utraquists, as the moderates were called, and the radical Taborites, was that the former supported the sort of negotiation and compromise that had taken place at Basel. Ultimately, the conflict between the two Hussite factions led to civil war and the defeat of the Taborites, as well as the death of Prokop himself. Yet the importance of those four months is that it began the process of reconciliation which culminated, after several more years of negotiation and tireless effort on the part of Cesarini, in the acceptance of the articles which had been determined at the council and which ultimately led to reconciliation with Sigismund just before his death in 1437.[29] These agreements, which were the compromise Cesarini had long sought, provided the theological and canonical framework for the existence of the Hussites within the bosom of the church. By the time another Hussite delegation had arrived at Basel in 1437 to discuss Communion under both forms (whence the term Utraquists), Cesarini's attention was absorbed by other matters. Despite this, he made it his purpose to bring the Hussite matter to a theological close, most importantly concerning the receipt of communion in two forms.[30]

The Contest to Achieve Union

Chief among the other matters concerning Cesarini in 1437 were the negotiations for a union between the Eastern and Western Churches. These had been formally divided from one another since 1054, a date which coincides roughly with the first incursions of the Turks into Anatolia. It was these incursions which resulted in the appeal of the Byzantine Emperor to Pope Urban II for western assistance, and it was this appeal which the papacy in turn relayed to the knights and sovereigns of Europe. Urban II encouraged them to re-take the Holy Land and relieve the pressure on their fellow Christians. Among other things, the papacy saw in the crusade a means of displaying its own supremacy vis à vis Byzantium by a show of force. For

[29] These were known as the Articles, or Compacta of Prague and were ratified in 1436. Soon after Sigismund was recognized as the legitimate king.

[30] For a more detailed discussion of these negotiations see Christianson, pp. 173–176.

the next several centuries two matters would dominate relations between Byzantium and Rome: re-unification and crusade.[31]

Though in 1096 the Byzantines were still a first-rate power in the Eastern Mediterranean, this position declined after consistent defeats by Muslim, Orthodox Christian (Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek rivals) and Latin Christian armies, i.e. by the very Western Christians whose help they had originally sought. The most egregious example of this was the sack of Constantinople by crusaders in 1204. This military takeover resulted in the first promulgation of union, brought about by force, as well as the establishment of Latin rule in Constantinople. The depredations and the humiliations suffered by the Byzantines during and after this violent takeover had the opposite effect of unification. Instead, they enabled a deep enmity against Latin Christendom to take firm root. Bertrandon de la Brocquière took note of this sentiment when he travelled through Byzantine lands in 1432–33.[32] For the Western Christians, these attacks were easily justified as punishments for the heresy of the Byzantines, and as a means for re-uniting them with Christendom by force. The goal, as Charles of Anjou put it, was "to undertake the pious task of restoring the noble limb severed by the schismatics from the body of our common mother, the Holy Roman Church."[33] Or, as Petrarch more bluntly put it, "The Turks are our enemies but the Greeks are schismatics and worse than enemies. They hate us in their guts." [34]

Despite these comments, there was a major difference between the "Byzantine heretic" and the "Mohammedan infidel." There was a possibility of re-unification with the former.[35] By the time of the Council of Lyons

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[31] Negotiations over union took place approximately 30 times between 1054 and 1439. See Deno J. Geanakoplos, 'The Council of Florence (1438–9) and the problem of Union between the Byzantine and Latin churches', *Church History* 24 (1955), p. 324. Union itself was declared three times (1204, 1374 and 1439). There were nine major crusading campaigns to the Near East and Balkans and several smaller ones.

[32] de la Brocquière, Bertrandon, *Le Voyage d'Outremer*, ed. C.H. Schefer (Paris: Ernest LeRoux, 1892), 148–149: "And when I boarded the Greek vessel to Scutari they thought I was a Turk [Brocquière was wearing a Turkish disguise] and paid me honors. And when they dropped me off on land I went into the city... The Greeks [at the port] knew that I was a (Western) Christian, and when I went to fetch my horse which I had left secured at the port I found only two of those Greeks, and they wanted to cheat me and overcharge me for my passage. They would happily have beat me if I would have let them, for at this time they despise (Western) Christians.

[33] Housley, *Later Crusades*, p. 51.

[34] Petrarch, *Lettere senili*, ed. G. Fracassetti, vol. I (Florence, 1869), pp. 422–424.

[35] Interestingly, there were also some interesting attempts at union with the Muslims, particularly on the part of certain prelates at the council of Basel, to include Nicholas of Cusa and John of Segovia. Both these men originally viewed Islam as a form of Christian

(1274) the Palaeologus dynasty had regained control of Constantinople. Yet the West was still greatly feared and highly despised. It was this antagonism, more than theological quibbles, that provided the greatest barrier to re-unification.[36] This did not prevent further attempts. At the Council of Lyons (1274) Pope Gregory X had sent for Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus in the hopes of negotiating a union.[37] For Gregory, not only would he re-unite the Church under his papacy, but he also hoped to obtain Byzantine assistance on a crusade to re-take Palestine. On the other hand, Michael VIII saw a means not only of obtaining some assistance against Muslim foes to the south, but also of avoiding the more immediate threat of an Angevin attack from the West.[38] In other words, Rome would aid Byzantium and deny Charles of Anjou his crusade, but only if the "schismatics" would re-enter Christendom. Manuel VIII's envoys agreed to accept papal supremacy and the much-contested "filioque"[39] clause. Union was achieved. It was also short-lived. Despite Michael's attempts, as well as those of his unionist patriarch John Bekkos, the notion of subordination to Rome remained disdainful for many Orthodox prelates and commoners. Gregory X soon died, and his successor Nicholas III as well as his successor Martin IV insisted on implementation of the agreed-upon union. This proved impossible given the climate in Constantinople. Having grown impatient with the Greeks, Martin IV excommunicated the Byzantine emperor once again and allowed the Angevins to undertake their crusade.[40]

Further attempts were made at negotiating a union in the 1320s and 1330s. This time, however, it was not fear of a Western crusade, but fear of

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heresy, common in faith but differing in rite. They devoted time to studying the Koran in an attempt to find common ground and a means of reconciling the two.

[36] For an analysis of the roots of this antagonism see Deno J. Geanakoplos, 'The Council of Florence (1438–9) and the problem of Union between the Byzantine and Latin churches', *Church History* 24 (1955), pp. 324–46 and reprinted in D.J. Geanakoplos, *Constantinople and the West* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1989), pp. 224–54. Aside from this antagonism, the author cites a difference in the conception of the Church –the monarchical claims of the papacy and the Byzantine concept of petrarchy—as the other great obstacle.

[37] See Housley, *Later Crusades*, pp. 51–53.

[38] Charles of Anjou, King of Sicily by conquest in 1266, had as his goal the seizure of the Byzantine Empire. He signed a treaty in Viterbo in 1267 whereby he would assist the exiled Latin Emperor, Baldwin, in regaining his throne in exchange for significant portions of the Empire.

[39] This clause stated that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the father and the son, a wording in the creed that the Byzantines insisted had been added by the Latins. An acceptable formulation on the meaning of this clause was reached by Cesarini and others at Florence in 1439.

[40] The crusade had to be aborted, however, due to the revolt known as the Sicilian Vespers, which had been supported in part by the Byzantines.

the Turks which propelled the Byzantines westward.[41] Due to the consistent expansion of the Ghazi Beys, most importantly the Ottoman dynasty, Byzantium had been reduced by the mid-fourteenth century to a shadow of its former self. Though Anatolia had long been relinquished, the seizure of Gallipoli in 1354 and the resulting Ottoman expansion into Europe meant that the Empire was encircled and cut off by land from the rest of Christendom. The once-mighty Empire of the Romans was literally cornered. The only way to achieve a breakthrough, it was thought, was by soliciting support from the West. Such assistance, of course, came with a price. The military might of the West now became a negotiating chip to force religious and theological concessions from the East. The Eastern Church, in turn, found itself willing to compromise on theological differences in order to achieve some breakthrough in its dire circumstances.[42]

John V Palaeologus became the sole, uncontested emperor of Byzantium in 1354, the same year that the Turks seized Gallipoli. He would become the most ardent champion of union with the West since Manuel VIII. The emperor proposed a two-part crusade to the Papacy in Avignon. The first expedition would not only pave the way for the larger one to follow, it would also convince the emperor's subjects that the West was sincere in its offers, which would lead them to desire union. This interesting proposition lays bare an inherent problem in the *quid pro quo* requests for western military assistance. As Norman Housley writes, "The Greek envoys argued that only the appearance of western assistance in the form of a crusade would persuade their people that the Latins were trustworthy and thus win them over to union, while the papal Curia believed that the Greeks would renege on any agreement once western help had solved their immediate difficulties."[43] Both John V and Pope Urban V, in the hopes of achieving their desired aims, played down this mistrust. Neither was very

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[41] Housley, *Later Crusades*, p. 56

[42] This sentiment is summed up accurately, albeit a bit dramatically, in the following passage from M. Jugie, Le schisme byzantin (Paris, 1941). I owe this quote to Gill, who has it cited on page 12 of *The Council of Florence*: "For Byzantium, the crusades could be a mortal danger or a providential help. To ensure that they should be the one and not the other, the emperors were forced to turn to him who directed the formidable machine. Sometimes it would be to gain from the pope that the machine should not be turned against them: sometimes that it come to the aid of the empire writhing under the blows of the Turks. Such is the secret of the offers of union from the Byzantine side. There was no element of idealism in them. If the pope had been only a spiritual power and had not controlled a political force of great magnitude, there would not have been on the part of the Byzantine emperors any unionistic negotiations at all."

[43] Housley, *Later Crusades*, p. 63.

successful. The pope and the emperor worked together on garnering support from western rulers such as Peter of Cyprus, Count Amadeus VI of Savoy, the Genoese and Louis of Hungary. The emperor himself undertook a humbling trip to Buda to plead assistance from the latter. On his return, he was seized by the Bulgarians and thrown into prison—glaring evidence of the lack of solidarity and sympathy within Christendom for the Byzantine plight.

One person to respond to the pope's summons was John V's cousin, Amadeus VI of Savoy. In 1367 he succeeded in re-taking Gallipoli, now the main staging point for Turkish expansion into the Balkans, and even rescued the emperor from the Bulgarians after laying siege to Varna.[44] John V was able to use this example of concrete Western aid to win support for his trip to the West in 1369. He arrived in Rome in the autumn of that year, and in October made a written and oral declaration that he accepted Rome's teachings and acknowledged papal primacy. In the end, however, neither side fulfilled its bargain. John V encountered the same stubborn resistance to union as had Manuel VIII. The pope fared no better, and was unable to arrange the promised crusade. The schism continued.

Despite the intentions of pope and emperor, it seemed clear that few Western Christians were willing to commit money and troops to relieve Byzantium. In part, this was because such an expedition, despite the attempts of the pope to spin it otherwise, had little to do with the original goal of crusading, i.e. liberating the Holy Land. It was extremely difficult to rouse the fervor and passions of men in the defense of erstwhile "schismatics." Therefore, although the papacy found great practical advantage in a potential union (it would increase papal authority, revenue, possibilities of appointment, etc.) most secular rulers found none. It took a threat to a large Western Christian kingdom, Hungary, for the great *passagium* to come to fruition. Though this crusade included many from Western Europe who were not directly threatened by Turkish expansion, particularly from Burgundy and France, the initiative and planning came from the King of Hungary, Sigismund, whose realm felt the direct pressure of unrelenting Ottoman expansion. In the absence of this threat, the crusade would never have been undertaken, least of all by the practical and savvy Sigismund whose troops comprised the main contingent.

The dramatic failure of the Crusade of Nicopolis removed from the table any sincere plans for a large expedition for many years. Another event,

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[44] Housley, *Later Crusades*, p. 68.

equally important, kept the Byzantines from seeking this support as fervently as they had in the past—the Battle of Ankara (1402). This battle, which ended in the capture of the sultan by the Mongol emperor Tamerlane, caused a collapse of the Ottoman Empire and an outbreak of internecine squabbling among its potential heirs. This gave the Byzantines some years of relief, wherein they were successful at pitting one rival against another so as to obtain concessions, ward off invasion, and even regain some lost territory. By the 1420s, however, the Ottoman Empire had been more or less re-established, as evinced by the siege of Constantinople in 1422. The Byzantines felt obliged to turn to the West once again. The new emperor, John VIII, found a willing partner in Pope Martin V.

During negotiations in 1426 and 1430[45] the basic agreement which would be later realized by the papacy in Ferrara was submitted by the Byzantines to the Holy See. The papacy would pay for four galleys to transport the emperor's delegation to Italy.[46] Martin V would be obliged to provide for two light galleys and three hundred crossbowmen to defend Constantinople in the emperor's absence. If they failed to achieve the union, then the delegation was to be borne back home across the sea, also at the expense of the pope. Martin's enthusiasm, however, was disproportionate to his means. Faced with penury, the Hussite wars, and troubles with the conciliarists he was unable to further pursue union with the Greeks. Yet the project was not forgotten, and it was picked up again with even greater enthusiasm in the 1430s, only this time in the atmosphere of discord and conflict between papists and conciliarists described above. This did not reduce the will to achieve union—quite the opposite—the conflict between pope and council for supremacy within the Western Church developed into a contest to show who was capable of bringing about union and therefore the more capable custodian of Christendom. There was no clearer mark of competence than to end four centuries of schism, reunite East with West and then lead a major expedition to expel the enemies of the faith. This became Eugene's strategy for dealing with both Byzantium and the rebellious council. It resulted in the Union of Florence and the crusades of 1443–44.

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[45] For a very detailed discussion of the negotiations for union under Pope Martin V, see Gill, *The Council of Florence*, pp. 16–45. See also Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, vol. 2, The Fifteenth Century (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1978), p. 46.

[46] Setton, p. 46.

The Union of Florence in 1439 can equally be attributed to the ambitions of the Byzantine emperor John VIII, who in this respect was similar to his namesake John V. He concluded that only through bold action could the declining fortunes of the pathetic stub of an empire be reversed. Not all, however, were in agreement. Sphrantzes, in his *Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, was not opposed to union on dogmatic or theological grounds, but because it was for him the initial catalyst for a series of events which resulted in the fall of Constantinople.[47] He relates a scene, which he alone was privy to, in which John's father Manuel counseled the young emperor on the dangers of over-ambition:

> Listen now to the true account, as I call on the very truth to be my witness. Our memorable emperor [Manuel] had spoken in my [Sphrantzes'] presence the following words concerning the synod to his son Lord John, our emperor, no one else was there: "My son, we truly, certainly know that the impious dread the day we come to terms and unite with the Franks; they believe that if this happens, they will suffer because of us a great misfortune at the hands of the Christians of the West.
>
> Well, then, as far as this synod is concerned, continue to study and plan it, especially when you need to frighten the impious. But do not bring it about, as I perceive our side unable to find a way of uniting and achieving peace and harmony; they will attempt to restore the original state. As this is impossible to achieve, I fear that a worse schism may develop and we will have nothing to protect us from the impious.
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> It seemed that the emperor disagreed with his father, as he said nothing but got up and left. His memorable, late father grew thoughtful, looked at me, and said: "My son the emperor is fitted to be an emperor, but not at the present moment. For he has great visions and plans but ones that were needed in the good old days of our ancestors. Today, as our affairs consume

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[47] Sphrantzes elaborates on this position quite eloquently in his history (George Sphrantzes, *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, edited and translated by Marios Philippides (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), pp. 49–50: "Would that they had never left [for Florence]! I am not saying this because of the dogmas of the church, as there are aothers to pronounce judgment on such matters. For my part, my ancestral inheritance of our faith is sufficient. Never have I heard anyone from the other side say that our form of worship is incorrect; on the contrary, they maintain that it was ancient and proper; similarly, their form of worship is not incorrect but proper." He then goes on to recite a quaint parable that describes two separate paths to the same church. He winds up this parable by saying, "Why can I not say: 'Go in peace and love to Hagia Sophia by whatever road you please; but I will use the road I have taken with you for a long time, a good road travelled and witnessed by you and my ancestors.'"

He then goes on to talk of the consequences: "I wish that the union of the churches had come about properly, even if it had cost me one of my eyes … because the synod was the single most important cause for the attack that the impious launched against our City, which resulted in the siege, our enslavement, and our great misfortunes."

> our attention, the empire needs not an emperor but an administrator. And I fear that his ideas and actions will bring about the downfall of our house. For I foresaw his plans and what he expected to accomplish with Mustafa, and I saw the results of his actions, which brought us into some danger.[48]

Sphrantzes' account may or may not be literal, but it is nonetheless an important insight into the character of John VIII by someone relatively close to him. It also presents two important issues surrounding the project of union: the inability of the union to sustain itself due to the intransigence of the Byzantine people, and the Ottoman reaction which might provoke an invasion that, given the failed union, would meet with no resistance from the West. Manuel's argument, as presented by Sphrantzes, was one based on political interest, a point which Sphrantzes is quite clear on. Yet there were others who took a more ideological approach.

It is useful to divide Byzantine sentiment into three categories: Turcophiles, Byzantophiles and a third group which found itself unable to embrace either option, but instead adopted a passive role characterized by inertia.[49] The smallest group, the Turcophiles, reckoned it better to seek a *modus vivendi* with the Ottomans, and reap whatever benefits might be had from this relationship. To choose to court the West at the expense of the Turks would only invite disaster, as Sphrantzes noted above. The problem with this approach was that it was inherently short-sighted. It was cooperation with the Turks (seeking assistance against the Serbian threat) that first brought the Ottomans to Europe. Nearly a century later, the Byzantine emperor was a vassal to the Ottoman sultan and his once great kingdom was confined to a small corner Europe. As before, the Turks would continue to expand, patiently but relentlessly, no matter how congenial the Byzantines might appear. Thus the Turcophile approach, though it might delay conquest, would not keep the Ottomans at bay indefinitely. Conquest, however, may not be so tragic. The Turcophiles concluded that a civilization can live on, even thrive, despite being conquered. The Ottomans had already demonstrated a good deal of cultural tolerance towards their Orthodox subjects in the Balkans. One need only look at the Balkans today to see that this sentiment contained a good deal of truth.

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[48] Sphrantzes, pp. 50–51.

[49] I found this categorization in Maciej Salamon, "Byzancjum wobec wyprawy warneńskiej," in *Świat chrześcijański i Turcy Osmańscy w dobie bitwy pod Warną*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego CLXXV, ed. Danuta Quirini-Popławska (Krakow: Jagiellonian University, 1995), pp. 74–75.

Perhaps the most infamous of the Turcophiles was John VIII's own brother, Demetrios Palaeologus. Demetrios expressed openly pro-Turkish and anti-Western views.[50] He despised the union, and even went so far as to lead an assault on Constantinople in 1442 with Ottoman support, hoping that he would win aid from the capital's citizens who were also against the union. There were others like him, who thought that by cooperating with and appeasing the Turks they might save their civilization, if not their empire, and at least eke out a principality or other privileged position for themselves and their families.

The other anti-unionist group saw that neither the Turcophile nor the Latinophile held any real prospects for the future of Byzantine civilization. Instead, they felt, one must wait patiently and pray for a major development—on the scale of the defeat at Ankara in 1402 for example—which might revive the fortunes of the Empire. Any movement to one side or the other would only precipitate disaster. An Act of Union was not only folly; it would turn Providence against them. Constantinople was still the New Jerusalem, "the fountainhead of the true faith," not only in the eyes of the Byzantines but of other Orthodox Christians as well. [51] As such, it was impossible to subordinate her to a schismatic pope or infidel sultan. Instead, it was necessary to lay one's trust in Providence, which would deliver the city from its enemies as it always had in the past. Though not a very active policy, it was nonetheless more easy to stomach than the debilitating compromises demanded by the other two. It was this aversion, as much as sincere faith, which drove so many to adopt this stance.

The final group, the Latinophiles, concerns us the most since it was the adherents of this party who travelled to Florence and enacted the union which culminated in the Crusade of Varna. This school maintained that the West held the only means to diminish, perhaps even eliminate the Turkish threat altogether.[52] This belief aroused hopes among some Byzantines as much as it caused consternation among the Turks. This in

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[50] See Sphrantzes, p. 53 and the accompanying footnote, as well as chapter XXXV, sec. 3.

[51] Dmitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth* (London: Sphere Books, 1974), p. 346. In regards to Russian Orthodoxy, he writes: "The vision of Constantinople as the New Jerusalem was tarnished and partially obscured in Russia as a result of the council of Florence, which marks a turning point in the relations between Muscovy and Byzantium."

[52] Though the emphasis in this work is on the connection between union and assistance against the Turks, it must be admitted that some of the Latinophiles were precisely what their name suggests, i.e. men who were appreciative, even fascinated with the culture of the Latin West. The famous Cardinal Bessarion is the clearest example. These men were motivated by more than just the desire for military assistance. Yet I would argue that this

itself led to the critique, noted by John VIII's father Manuel, that rapprochement with the West would lead to an attack on Constantinople.

Aside from Ottoman reprisal the Latinophile approach had another disadvantage. Should the West succeed in a grand crusade and actually expel the infidel, what would their policy be towards the re-conquered territories? History would seem to indicate that the West would only hold on to whatever lands they had seized, having no incentive to hand them back over to their schismatic rivals.[53] There are indications that this was the plan during the Varna crusade as well. The chronicler Długosz writes that Hunyadi was promised the Kingdom of Bulgaria in return for supporting the campaign of 1444.[54] Historical precedence would also suggest that the Latins would not only partition the Balkans, but make less tolerant and more aggressive neighbors than the Ottomans. As one 15th century Byzantine polemicist wrote: "Let no one be deceived by delusive hopes that the Italian allied troops will come to save us. If they pretend to rise and defend us, they will take arms only to destroy our city, our race, and our name."[55]

It was hoped, however, that a true union of East and West would divert some of the Western aggression regarding Byzantium, as it had for a very brief time after the Council of Lyons (see above). A union, one argued, would remove the schism as a pretext for anti-Byzantine hostility. The Long March and the Varna crusade present evidence supporting the notion that, for the short period while it lasted, the Act of Union ameliorated to some extent western aggression. Andreas de Pallatio, the author of a detailed eyewitness account describing the campaign of 1444, writes that "when [Wladislas] saw that the men of his army were ravaging not only the Turks but also the Bulgarians and that they had no reverence for the Churches of the Greeks and Bulgarians or the temples of the pagans,"[56] he summoned de Pallatio to issue a document known as the Act of Nrem. In this document Wladislas advised and ordered the Turks "to release from under your yoke

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fondness for things western, though at times significant, was secondary to the starkly practical motivation of receiving military help in exchange for union.

[53] During the first crusade, the Byzantines assumed the Christians would hand over any re-conquered lands to the "original" possessors, i.e. the Byzantines. Instead, the crusaders set up their own principalities. The same, of course, occurred after 1204, in which large parts of the Byzantine Empire itself were converted into Latin principalities, albeit of a transient nature.

[54] Długosz, p. 306.

[55] This quote is from Joseph Bryennios, as found in Geneakoplos, p. 334.

[56] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, p. 462.

and authority those Christian men, Greeks or Bulgarians, who... most recently left the Oriental Rite and entered into union under the Holy Pope Eugene IV, and for whose liberation we most recently departed from our Kingdoms of Poland and Hungary and have thus far travelled."[57] In this document at least, the crusade is presented as a war of liberation occasioned by the union recently enacted with the Western Church.[58] This does not mean that the local population ceased to suffer. The crusaders relied, as medieval western armies invariably did, on plunder and pillage to provision themselves. It is this fact which accounts for much of the brutality reported by chroniclers describing the campaigns of 1443 and 1444. Yet the predatory practices of these armies were not reserved for infidels or schismatics. Hungarian sources from the period explicitly forbade gathering troops to pillage the lands of local noblemen in Hungary while en route to a designated assembly point within the kingdom. If soldiers could not be hindered from plundering within the kingdom itself, what was to prevent them from doing so while on campaign in a foreign land?

Other sources corroborate Wladislas' partial treatment of the Balkan Christians. Concerning the siege of Vidin in 1444, Michel Beheim[59] writes, "They conquered this town (Vidin) on the seventh day. The chief men were massacred, because they were Turkish cowards. The common people were Christians. They surrendered, and nothing was done to them." Later, at the siege of Nicopolis, he writes "There were many Greeks in [Nicopolis] and a huge number of Turks. The Greeks jumped over the wall and joined the Hungarians." The Turks, however, "were all later killed and massacred."[60] There are other examples from both 1443 and 1444 of willing cooperation between the Balkan Christians and the crusaders which will be discussed later when describing these campaigns. On the whole, however, it seems that the crusaders, or at least the army's leadership, saw themselves as

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[57] Ibid., nr. 303.

[58] It should also be pointed out that Wladislas' tolerance might not be representative of the rest of Latin Christendom. Polish rulers were quite used to ruling over Orthodox Christian subjects, and Wladislas would have no doubt viewed any exaggerated and cruel treatment of them as perverse. Also, Wladislas' and the crusader's motives may have been merely strategic, i.e. an attempt to win over the local populace to increase their chances of defeating the Turks. Whatever their motives, it seems fairly clear that the crusaders' campaign, though it contained its fair share of pillaging and plundering, as did all medieval campaigns, was not overly prejudiced against the Orthodox subjects of the Balkans.

[59] Beheim's account was not mere fiction, but based on, and perhaps to a large extent plagiarized from, the account of an actual particpant, Hans Maugest. Beheim admits to this fact at the end of his work.

[60] Beheim, pp. 337, 339 (Imber's tranlation, pp. 172–173).

liberators and their treatment of the Balkan Christians was less cruel than the opponents of union had feared.

For many the potential gains of appealing to the West seemed to outweigh the risks. It was with this in mind that negotiations between John VIII and both the council and the papacy were begun again in the 1430s. The negotiations with Eugene IV were seen at first as a continuation of those that John VIII had held with Martin V. Yet after 1432, as mentioned above, the papacy was in dire straits. It was threatened by the council in Basel, and did not wish to allow the deliberations to take place there for fear of what might be decided by both East and West at its expense. Many of its lands, including Rome, had been overrun by condottieri and the pope was living in exile in Florence, therefore it was difficult to even find a safe place to hold a council in northern Italy. Unable to collect adequate finances the curia was nearly bankrupt and could not afford to bring 700 Greeks to Italy. For these reasons Eugene IV, through his legate, assented in the summer of 1433 to the Byzantine request that the deliberations for union be held in Constantinople. This did not sit well with Basel, for if the Assembled Fathers were forced to move to Constantinople, it would be nearly impossible to control the deliberations, and the conciliarists would be greatly weakened. They therefore sent their own delegation to Constantinople in order to convince the Greeks to come to them.

The Greeks responded favorably to the council's gesture, and sent their own delegation to Basel to hammer out logistics. They arrived there on 2 July, 1434.[61] They were greeted warmly by the council, and even more so by its president, Cardinal Cesarini, who took advantage of the occasion to deliver his first discourse regarding union to the Greek delegation.[62] It is important, for it expresses perhaps better than any of his other speeches the correlation between union and the anti-Turkish crusade. Cesarini does not dwell on points of theology; this is for a later date. Instead, he mentions the import of their coming, the need to put aside ill will and adhere to the principle of charity. Union, he says, is founded on love; schism is the product of Satan. God wants union, even commands it. Since both have a common creed and bible, they are in fact already one, only trivial and inflated obstacles stand in the way. Having discussed such ideas at length, he proceeds to more practical matters, to that portion which the Greeks had come

[61] See Gill, *The Council of Florence*, pp. 55–56.

[62] Joannes Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, vol. 29, 1431–1434 (Venice: Antonio Zatta, 1788), pp. 1241–1244.

to hear—schism is the cause of the infidel threat, and this threat can only be dispelled through union.

The infidel[63], he states, does not respect but mocks Christendom on account of the schism. Moreover they do nothing to try to achieve Orthodoxy but persist in their error, for they know not which faith to choose when the Christians cannot themselves agree.[64] It is shameful and ironic that the infidels should have such accord in their false sects and beliefs, while the followers of the true faith are plagued by discord. It is on account of this discord that so many are driven to the faith of the infidel. Should not the loss of souls to perdition which this entails, and for which those assembled will be held accountable on judgment day, be enough to motivate the Church to unite? Cesarini bemoans at length the injuries and injustices suffered by Christendom from the infidel in the 400 years since the schism began. How many great towns and cities have been reduced to rubble? How many peoples and provinces, once so numerous, have been wiped out without a trace? How much ruin and depopulation has followed?" He goes on to describe how the Turks are subjecting the Eastern Christians to a horrible servitude, forcing them to pay tribute and compelling them to convert thereby exposing them to eternal perdition. "Who does not know of these things, and knowing does not weep, and who in weeping does not provide assistance?" Appealing to the humanists, he goes on to describe how the arts once flourished in Byzantium, "the source of all eloquence," and where great seminars were held for the literati. Yet the Greeks themselves well know to what state it has now been brought.

> It is the opinion of all that this disagreement has been the cause of all these things. So it is your future unity with us that is believed by all to be the solution. There is no easier remedy for these calamities, than for all those who serve Christ to bind together in unity in the same faith, and for one to bear the other's burden, just as brothers ought, and to aid one another. Upon hearing of this union all Christendom (*populus Christianus*) will most certainly run to aid you and drive the Turks from Greece, if the mere rumor of our reconciliation itself does not terrify them such that they will be forced to despair of remaining longer in your land. We have called together the kings, dukes and princes of all Christendom. But even if not called upon still they will come to your aid, for there is no one who would not come to your assistance with whatever force and strength he might have. It seems to me that it will not be long after this union that Majestic Greece will once

[63] Under the term infidel he includes Jews, Saracens and Turks.

[64] It is interesting that Cesarini, like many of his contemporaries, saw conversion of Jews and Muslims as an attainable and desirable goal.

> again be restored to all its former freedom and glory, and that it will recoup its honor, dignities and great beauty. And God willing let it be to that Greece, as it had been once before in a happier time, to which the Latin and Greek churches are once again bound together in love.[65]

This last passage was the climax of Caesarini's address. He depicts the tragic situation, offers up a means to remedy this situation, and then describes the glorious outcome. It is a masterful work of oratory, and it was intended for both the Greek and Latin Fathers equally. Just like the speech he delivered to the Hussites, he emphasizes that disunity is the cause of the infidel threat, and unity is the solution.

But it is the implied promise of a crusade which is most significant here, for Cesarini suggests in no uncertain terms that union will lead to the expulsion of the Turks via a grand western expedition. Was this merely a platitude or did he believe this? It is my opinion that he did. The cardinal was certainly given to flights of oratory, but he was not known to be disingenuous. He disdained sarcasm. His previous actions regarding the Hussites showed a commitment, perhaps even a zeal for crusading, so long as the movement served the Church and Christendom. When Bertrandon de la Brocquière arrived at Basel in 1433, he was questioned and prodded by the cardinal for information about the Turks and the lands he had traveled through, particularly as it might relate to a Balkan crusade, a matter "which he desired greatly and held close to his heart."[66] His later actions to bring about such a crusade show that even if the great optimism he felt in 1434 was tempered by obstinate realities some ten years later, he still held the dream and worked as hard as he might to realize it. Cesarini once wrote to Eugene IV, "*Pro fide cupio et vovi mori.*" (I desire and have vowed to die for the faith.) His actions both against the Hussites and against the Turks demonstrate that he took this vow quite seriously. He would make good on it at Varna.[67]

After the council's reception and Cesarini's speech, the two sides got down to negotiating the details, wherein in this case the devil certainly lay. The council, of course, wanted the emperor and bishops to come to Basel. This the Greek delegates could not accept, but they were willing to agree

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[65] Translated from Mansi, ut supra.

[66] Brocquière, pp. 257–258.

[67] Cesarini wrote these words to Eugene IV at the beginning of Basel, when he appealed to the pope to retract his dissolution of the assembly, knowing that if he did not Cesarini might find himself murdered by the Assembled Fathers. For the full context of this quote, see Robert Jenkins, *The Last Crusader: or, the life and times of Cardinal Julian, of the House of Cesarini* (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), pp. 170–171.

to a city in Italy, or, outside of Italy, to Buda[68], Vienna, or at the most Savoy. They agreed, as per the accord with Martin V, that Basel cover the costs for the delegates' journey to the council and their upkeep while there, as well as provide the archers and ships which had been mentioned in the other agreements. They also insisted that the pope approve, in an official bull, of whatever was decided between the council and the Greeks as far as place, etc., and that the pope himself be present during the council for union.

As the papacy's situation in Italy improved and it felt greater confidence vis à vis the intransigent council, Eugene IV pushed once again to host the negotiations for union in Italy. In exchange for this, he would solicit the Hungarians and Germans for a crusade.[69] Should this happen, the papacy would no doubt declare the council at Basel to be officially transferred to the agreed-upon city in Italy. There, as the Assembled Fathers knew, he could easily stymie the conciliarists.[70] The latter, unable to convince the Greeks to come to Basel, began to put forth other possibilities. The most infamous proposal was Avignon, a city which still conjured to mind the papacy's "Babylonian captivity" during the period of the Great Western Schism. Many suspected that the French (who under the leadership of Cardinal d'Aleman, the Archbishop of Arles, were increasingly dominating the council) were in fact trying to revive the schism.

Cardinal Cesarini's influence at Basel fell as the Archbishop of Arles' rose. His sentiments seemed no longer in tune with those of the Assembled Fathers, and this became most clear over the proposed union. By insisting on Basel, Avignon or Savoy, none of which would be agreeable to the Greeks, and certainly not the pope,[71] they were jeopardizing the possibility of union altogether. This was unconscionable to Cesarini. The council now seemed to him more concerned with battling Eugene IV than handling the problems of Christendom. He and those of his party (known to posterity as the *pars sanior*, or saner party) proposed Florence or any other place

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[68] Buda found its way into the proposal due to Sigismund's machinations. See Gill, *The Council of Florence*, p. 71.

[69] Chalkokondyles, p. 294, writes: "When the emperor of the Greeks sought a garrison for defending Constantinople, the pope responded that he would place this kingdom and the Greeks under his care, and moreover that he would not cease to incite the Hungarians and Germans to take up arms against the Turks. This very much pleased the Greeks and the others."

[70] The conciliarists were well aware of this. As Segovia wrote, they would never go "where the pope held dominion." Gill, *The Council of Florence*, p. 164.

[71] The Greeks had insisted that the pope be present at the negotiations.

the pope might agree to. It was in this atmosphere that Cesarini and his adherents began moving closer to the papacy.

The result of the discord at Basel was that decrees from both the minority and majority party were sent to Constantinople in the spring of 1437, along with their respective representatives. Those representing the council majority, i.e. those who were arguing for a council in Avignon, threatened that they would sabotage the council if it were held elsewhere. "But if he (John VIII) would come, they would bestow on him a great army against the Turks, and the council would grant a crusade, i.e. the sign of the cross (*signum crucis*) with all indulgences to all those wanting to expel the Turks."[72] The threat fell flat. The Greeks endorsed the minority decree which had been written by the *sanior pars* and had been also endorsed by the pope. On 27 November, 1437, Emperor John VIII, along with representatives from the Byzantine Orthodox Church, set sail for Ferrara.

Why did John VIII choose the pope over the council? The simple and immediate reason was that the council had not fulfilled its end of the agreement.[73] Yet there was much more to the emperor's decision. Based on theology and ecclesiology alone, the Assembled Fathers at Basel would have seemed the more appropriate partner. The Orthodox community in the East had endorsed a concept of Pentarchy in which many recognized the Bishop of Rome as first among equals, but still an equal. Real authority in Church matters derived from the ecumenical councils. This was quite similar to conciliar theory. But the issue at stake was not primarily theology. John VIII and his delegation saw union not as an end but as a means to an end. That end was military assistance from the West. The more radical conciliarists felt that they could provide this, just as they could take on all the duties and offices of the papacy. Cesarini tried in vain to dispel this illusion. Addressing the council on the necessity of meeting the Greek demands of a suitable location and inclusion of the pope, he argued first that the council's proposed locations were unsuitable, and second that they would not induce the participation of the papacy. He went on to say why the latter's participation was essential to union:

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[72] Diary of John Digne, in George Hoffman, *Fragmenta Protocolli, Diaria Privata, Sermones, in Concilium Florentinum Documenta et Scriptores*, Series A, vol. 3, fasc. 2.

[73] The explicit reasons that John VIII gave the Basel delegates was that they had not fulfilled the conditions of time, place and the pope. "They were late in time, the proposed cities were not contained in the decree and inconvenient for both the Greeks and the Pope in spite of his reiterated insistence on the importance of this, and they were divided from the Pope who would not be present." Gill, *The Council of Florence*, p. 81.

> (Cesarini) then said that it was necessary, not because of the law, but because of practical necessity that the pope be present at the council. First of all because of the required expenses, which were mounting to two hundred thousand ducats. The sale of indulgences (planned by the council) would not cover a fifth of this sum. It would therefore be necessary to impose a general tithe, which would be impossible to enact without papal consent. [Papal presence would also be needed] to bring aid against the Turks. For it was likely that these would attack Constantinople in the emperor's absence, and they (the council) would be unable to provide assistance without the cooperation of the papacy and other princes. The emperor would then have just reasons for saying that these things occurred because of his coming to them (the council). For it is believed that the Greeks are coming more to obtain assistance from them (the Latin church) in order to relieve the oppressions of the Turks, than for disputations which never resolve differences. For they will call upon their authorities and we ours. Thus if union should occur the purpose of the council will be to aid against the Turks, and for this the pope must be present.[74]

Cesarini, and more importantly the Greeks, believed that a crusade would fail if it were called and managed by the conciliarists. The Fathers at Basel may have known this as well, but the continuation of their assembly took precedence, and therefore they could not tolerate its transfer to Italy under the auspices of the curia. Yet by failing to work with the pope they had in fact conceded him victory. From the winter of 1437 onward the assembly at Basel would take on more and more the character of an intractable naysayer, and cease to be a contributing partner for the betterment of Christendom. Cesarini, Nicolas of Cusa, and others soon abandoned the council and headed to Ferrara where they would work with the pope toward achieving union. Without their ameliorating presence the council became more vehement and inflammatory, eventually deposing Eugene IV and electing an antipope, Felix V. The much-feared schism, which Cesarini had worked patiently and tirelessly to avoid, was now realized.

This complicated matters for the papacy, which was now forced to spend much of its diplomatic efforts towards securing as many princes of Christendom to its obedience as possible. It seemed as if the Western Church were headed back to the schismatic papacy which pre-dated Constance. Yet over time it became clear that Eugene IV had the upper hand. The papacy would bring about the union between East and West. The papacy would lead the crusade against the Turks. The papacy held the reins of Christendom.

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[74] Italics added. From Segovia, p. 912.

The Crusade Project at the Council of Florence

After the Greeks' arrival in Ferrara (the council was transferred several months later to Florence, where it reconvened in the beginning of 1439) it would be nearly two more years before the Act of Union would be proclaimed. Heated debates were held concerning the infamous *filioque* clause, recognition of papal primacy, the nomination of prelates, etc. Many of these battles were fought and won by Cesarini himself, who earned the warm admiration and respect of the Greeks both in official sessions, where he debated points of theology, and at banquets and dinners where he would discuss classical poetry. Though it was important that these debates take place, and that men such as Cesarini offer up the necessary arguments and make the necessary compromises, the fact is the union was destined to be realized from the moment the emperor departed Constantinople. Eugene IV wanted union for the same reasons as his predecessors—augmented prestige, control over appointments, increased income, and by every indication he harbored a genuine desire to see the schism ended and wholeness restored to Christendom. Yet Eugene IV had another powerful reason. The presence of the emperor of the Greeks at Ferrara, not at Basel, was glaring evidence to Latin Christendom that the true head of the Church was not the council, but the pope.

As for John VIII, he had demonstrated long ago that he was more than willing to swallow this pill of humility in exchange for what he desperately needed to pull his empire from the edge of oblivion—a crusade. Yet he could not simply order the Greek prelates to enact the union. As he told Eugene IV, "I am not the master of the Greek synod, nor do I want to use my authority to force it to any statement."[75] The emperor was still the protector of his church, and he could not compromise that authority for political expediency. He did, however, attempt to guide the efforts of the Greek synod and at least keep it to the task at hand. While trying to maintain his stance as an honest patron and authority, he could use others to deliver stronger arguments on behalf of union.

Among these was the Byzantine representative George Scholarius, who delivered one of the most forceful addresses on behalf of union to the Greek synod in April of 1439. The work was titled *De Pace deque Adjuvanda Patria.*[76] Scholarius begins by chiding (and even denigrating) those who discount

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[75] Gill, *The Council of Florence*, p. 253.

[76] For his orations at the council see Joseph Gill, *Orationes Georgii Scholarii in Concilio Florentino Habitae* (Rome: Pontificium Institum Orientalium Studiorum, 1964).

the scholarship of the Latins, and states that the Latins can call upon earnest evidence, and not mere sophistry, to support their arguments. He does not mince words, but states rather plainly that it would be better to "omit the speeches, accept the peace (union) and with this in hand return home."[77] He goes on to say that "you all know the specific reason why we have opted for union," that he need not reiterate the "evils, which we face from the infidels who have brought our country to abject misery." They must not return home empty-handed. The Latins are prepared to help them. "For no one among the Latins or the barbarians (Turks) is unaware that the primary purpose of this union is the hope of military assistance, and that there remains no other means for us of salvation." The Turks, indeed, are afraid of the union for this reason. He then mentions the threat of Ottoman siege then facing the city in the spring of 1439,[78] and in this context reminds the Greeks of the last time when they were besieged by land, when "the part of the wall that faces the sea and is twice as large as the remaining wall had no guard (for no one was attacking us from there) and how much fear and anxiety we had. But now we must defend the entire wall. There are only half as many military forces and people in the city now as there were then." The city needs its emperor and its leaders, and they should simply leave behind three or four men to negotiate the details and return to the city with a host of warships supplied partly by the Latins and partly by their own funds. Otherwise, they will be perceived not only as idlers and fools but as negligent in the defence of their families and their homeland.

These arguments were bolstered by statements from the curia and even the pope, who tantalized the imperiled Greeks with assurances of Western aid if only they would accept the union. In the face of Greek obstinacy, Eugene himself addressed the Greek synod reiterating and reinforcing the same sentiments expressed by Scholarius:

> What am I to say? I see division everywhere before my eyes and I wonder what use to you division will be. Still if it shall be, how are the western princes going to look on it? And what grief will you yourselves have; indeed how are you going to return home? Union, however, once achieved, both the western princes and all of us wil be greatly rejoiced and will provide generous help for you. And our aid will be a great source of alleviation to the Christians dwelling in the East and to those in the power of the infidel.[79]

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77 Gill, *Orationes*, p. 10.

78 Gill, *The Council of Florence*, pp. 239–243.

79 The quotation is taken from Gill, *The Council of Florence*, p. 254.

Having made such declarations Eugene realized he would eventually be expected to come good on them. He began early on laying the groundwork for a crusade. The key to the expedition was to involve the ruler of Hungary, whose participation was a prerequisite for any campaign. In order to win over Albert (king of Hungary since 1438) to his cause the curia dispatched John de Dominis,[80] Bishop of Senj and later Bishop of Oradea, who would ultimately die on the battlefield at Varna. John de Dominis had prior experience at the Hungarian court, where as early as March 1437 he had been sent to deal with Sigismund on the issue of moving the council to Florence pending the arrival of the Greeks and the implications of this policy.[81] Later, in 1438, the pope asked de Dominis to travel to Hungary and inquire "whether the current king, or barons, nobles and magnates of the said kingdom might prepare an army or an expedition for the extermination and expulsion of the Turkish infidels." They were also to preach the crusade, "and induce any and all who seem useful and suitable to take up the Holy Cross and, being thus affected in their hearts and bones, to bravely gird themselves to check the advance of the infidels and Turks."[82]

Albert may have taken a vow of crusade in the winter of 1438, perhaps under the influence of de Dominis.[83] If he did, then political necessity forced him to quickly abandon the idea. In 1438 and through part of 1439 Albert was embroiled in a bloody war with King Wladislas of Poland over the Bohemian succession (see chapter 3). He had no troops to spare for a crusade. John de Dominis, as papal legate, worked for months (alongside

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[80] The career of John de Dominis is discussed in more detail in chapter three.

[81] Jorga, Nicolae, ed., *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XVe siècle*, vol. 2 (Paris: Ernest LeRoux, 1899), p. 4. Also *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, vol. 12, nr. 27, pp. 40–43. The pope's letter to de Dominis in 1438 suggests that introductory negotiations with Sigismund about a crusade had recently taken place, shortly before the emperor's death. Given the other missions in which de Dominis was involved, and the time frame, it seems more than plausible that the idea of crusade was brought up in 1437 as well.

[82] Georgius Fejer, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, vol. XI (Budapest: Royal Hungarian University, 1844), nr. 64, pp. 162–163.

[83] Pero Tafur, who witnessed the vow in Chrismas of 1438, is not quite clear as to what the vow refers to: "He said further, in the presence of all, that he had made a solemn vow not to accept the Imperial crown, nor even to enjoy its revenues, until that which the Venetians had filched was restored to the Empire. Then having retaken the Holy Sepulchre, he would be crowned there. All who heard this vow were very glad, except the Venetians who straightway departed." Is this a vow to wage war on Venice, to seize Jerusalem in A crusade, or both? Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435—1439*, trans. and ed. with an introduction by Malcolm Letts (New York, London: Harper & brothers, 1926), p. 214.

delegates from Basel) to secure a peace agreement between Albert and Wladislas in order to pave the way for an eventual expedition.[84]

The pope made an attempt to solicit aid from the rest of Christendom as well. In the late autumn or early winter of 1437 the curia dispatched Bartolomeo di Giano, a Franciscan friar, along with thirty others of his order to rebuild the Franciscan priory in Constantinople.[85] He had also named di Giano the General Vicar of the order in the east.[86] His mission in the city was threefold: to convince John VIII to accept the papal invitation to the council,[87] to keep himself and the papacy informed of Turkish movements and military/political developments in the Balkans, and to write letters to various Christian rulers soliciting their help against the Turks. In

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[84] Długosz makes mention of de Dominis as papal legate during the negotiations in Breslau in early 1439 (Długosz, pp. 202–204). Lidia Korczak's footnote (ibidem, p. 396) states that the legate was John Cervantes. It seems this mistake is based on interpreting "Seginensis" as "Segniensis". That it was in fact de Dominis is clearly demonstrated in two papal accounting entries published in: Jorga, *Notes et Extraits*, vol. 2, pp. 12–13, folios 222 and 225.

[85] Franz Babinger lists the name of this priory as the monastery of Saint Antonius de Cipressis, which was later destroyed by the Turks upon seizure of the city in 1453 (Franz Babinger, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Genuesen Iacopo de Promontorio - de Campis über den Osmanenstaat um 1475*, in vol. 8 of Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch Historische Klasse Sitzungsberichte Jahrgang 1956. (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1957), p. 9. The time of Bartolomeo di Giano's arrival is given in his letter to a friend dated 12 December, 1438 (Migne, pp. 1055–1068): "Memor esse potes, ut credo, dilecte Pater, quando a Domino nostro papa sanctissimo destinati ad partes istas, a Venetiis discessimus, ubi et tu subito ab Hierusalem rediens applicuisti, quomodo vulgabatur ibidem diebus proximis, Hungaros aliqua Teucrorum navigia combussisse, nec non etiam plurimos occidisse illorum." The raid referred to is the one undertaken by Sigismund's troops on Kruševac in June 1437 (see chapter three). Therefore it was shortly after this date that Bartolomeo arrived in Constantinople. This timeline is corroborated by another letter of di Giano to John de Lascaris in 1444, in which he states that he was sent by the pope to Constantinople six years earlier. The date of this second letter, in an edition published in Jehan de Wavrin, *Anchiennes Chronicques d'Engleterre*, ed. Mlle. DuPont (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1859) is listed as February 3, 1443. This is impossible, however, since the letter describes the Long March, which took place through December of 1443 and into January 1444. It seems one digit is missing on the year, and that it therefore dates from February 3, 1444, not 1443. In any case, di Giano relates the location of his mission as well as the fact that he arrived in Constantinople six years earlier: "depuis six ans en cha que nous sommes demourans yci." Agostino Pertusi published yet another letter from di Giano dating from 1439 and included a description of the author and his other works, though he likewise repeats the abovementioned errors. (Agostino Pertusi, "La Situazione dell' Europa Orientale dopo la caduta di Smederevo (1439) in una lettera inedita di Fra Bartolomeo di Giano," in *Byzance et les slaves: études de civilisation* (Paris : Assoc. des Amis des Etudes Archéologiques des Mondes Byzantino-Slaves et du Christianisme Oriental, 1979), pp. 337–372.

[86] Luke Wadding, ed., *Annales Minorum seu trium ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum, vol. XI* (Florence: Quarachi, 1931), p. 248

[87] This is mentioned in *Annales Minorum*, vol. XI, p. 67.

the latter endeavor di Giano did not seem particularly successful, as he laments in 1438 after the Ottoman expedition in Transylvania:

> Alas, for the wretches should and can help but do not do so. Nor did they lack advance notice [of Murad's invasion]. For I sent brethren [to them] on behalf of the majority and wrote more than thirty letters long before the month of December when that man (Murad II) was preparing an army against them. And these letters I sent to the emperor and the dukes—they had them, they read them but they did not care, as the results themselves show. That trumpet of God, Friar James, was also proclaiming this before the kings and princes and was declaring these injuries to their faces, saying: Behold, you wretches, foreigners despoil your homeland, dishonor your wives in your presence, and lead your brothers and sons off in chains — and yet you do not care. But when they heard these words and the like, they laughed and seemed without feeling. And what is more, our lord, the most holy pope, even sent them eternal gifts, namely the indulgence of their sins, if any would take up arms against the infidel.[88]

The letter above was addressed to another Observant Franciscan, Albert of Sartiano,[89] who was at the time involved in preaching in Venice. It was meant not only to inform, but also, as the author openly states, to provide fodder for Sartiano's own sermons. Indeed the Franciscans as a whole, and in particular the Observant Franciscans, played a key role in the organization and prosecution of the crusade. Seeing in Cesarini a man who shared their convictions regarding an expanded view of Christendom and the crusade, they requested that he become the Protector of the Order in June 1439. Franciscans would serve alongside him during the expeditions of 1443 and 1444, and a number of them were slain by the Turks, along with the cardinal, the morning after the Battle of Varna.[90] There were likewise several Franciscans, including di Giano himself, that accompanied the papal fleet in 1444/45.[91] One of these had even learned in the Holy Land the useful skill of de-spiking cannon.[92]

First and foremost the Franciscans served as preachers. Prior to traveling to Constantinople di Giano had preached in Italy, and he continued to

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[88] Migne, pp. 1064–1065. I rely on W.L. North's English translation for the above text.

[89] Sartiano and di Giano were two of six Franciscans mentioned in the *Annales Minorum* as playing a key role in serving the papacy and the projects of union and crusade (*Annales Minorum*, vol. XI, p. 210).

[90] Johannes Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, edited and translated by Frank Mantello (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1991), p. 146. Hereafter referred to as Thuróczy.

[91] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 150). This is the friar Wavrin refers to in the following passage: "Now the guardian of the Friars Minor in Constantinople was on the cardinal's galley, a respected man, a doctor of theology and a good churchman."

[92] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 153).

preach in the East for the cause of union and for the crusade. The same was true of Albert of Sartiano, who di Giano mentions had traveled through eastern and western Christendom to raise support. What the papacy needed most of all was money if it was going to pay for the coming council and in particular the generous stipends promised to the Greek delegation, not to mention a future crusade. After preaching about the depredations of the Turks and the sorrowful plight of the Greeks the friars would then solicit support. This could come in the form of vows of personal participation in a crusade and/or mediated support in the form of funds. Either of these could earn the crusader/donor an indulgence or mitigate/eliminate an existing sanction, as stated clearly in a letter from Eugene IV to Cardinal Condulmer in 1443.[93] The number of these personal participants from various parts of Europe who took part in the campaigns of 1443 and 1444 was relatively low and they did not play a decisive role. The professionalization of armies was taking place throughout the West, and funds in lieu of personal participation were not only welcome but encouraged. Personal participation was, however, strongly solicited from princes and sovereigns. This was because they would bring their own semi-professional armies along with them. These rulers became the special target of gifted preachers such as John of Capistrano, who would earn great fame for his role years later at the Second Siege of Belgrade in 1456. He traveled to the Burgundian court in 1443 and to the Iberian peninsula in 1444 to raise money and men for the crusade. He succeeded in winning over the support of Philip the Good, who became the only participant in 1444 who was not directly threatened by the Ottoman menace.

Money and recruits were sought not only in the West but in Eastern and Central Europe as well. As Wavrin wrote concerning Cesarini's arrival in Hungary:

> They all of them went out in triumph to greet and honor the new cardinal. He was received with reverence, and at once expert preachers and qualified priests were chosen to leave and go throughout the two kingdoms (Poland and Hungary) to proclaim and preach the crusade. They were to carry graces, indulgences and pardons, which everyone could acquire through the campaign, either by going in person or by donating their possessions, in accordance with the means and ability of each contributor. When the preachers broadcast the marvelous graces of the Holy Father, they moved the hearts

[93] Augustinus Theiner, ed., *Vetera Monumenta Slavorum Meridionalium Historiam Illustrantia*, vol. 1 (Osnabruck: Otto Zeller, 1968), nr. 548, pp. 380–381. This was standard practice in all eras of crusading.

> of the people to such devotion that a number of them, personally and at their own expense, took up arms to fight the infidel Turks and to defend the holy Christian faith. The others gave gold or silver to hire warriors.[94]

The council of Ferrara/Florence constituted an important venue for the discussion of the crusade. Addressing the council on 1 November, 1438, the Abbot of Clarevallis, serving as a representative of the Duke of Burgundy touched upon the subject of a crusade to the East in a lengthy speech delivered to the assembled Fathers. He argued that if East and West should unite, then the pope would find many willing to undertake the crusade. Together East and West, like the united tribes of ancient Israel, would retake the Holy land. Echoing Cesarini's speech from 1434, he writes that it is imperative that they free the lands of the Greeks, "illustrious men full of wisdom and elegance and seriousness of character, possessed of wondrous virtues and shining graces," and restore it to its pristine glory. He then turns back again to the liberation of Jerusalem, asking "who could be so cowardly and abject in character that he would not leave everything and follow Christ, risking his life to recover the Holy Land." Like Cesarini, he states that it is the divisions of Christians and their lack of charity and love which aid the 'Mohameddans.'[95]

John Torcello,[96] employed at the time by John VIII, gave one of the more interesting addresses on the Balkan crusade on 16 March, 1439.[97] This relatively brief "*aviso*" outlined a military strategy to drive the Turks out of Europe and liberate the Holy Land. A copy of the address was eventually translated into French and delivered to Philip the Good, who asked

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[94] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 113).

[95] Hoffmann, *Fragmenta*, nr. 63, pp. 260–270.

[96] Torcello, of Catalan origins, seems to have served both the emperor and the pope in order to bring about the crusade. He appears first at the council in the service of the Byzantines. Eugene IV quickly brought him into his own service, making him a familiaris in August of 1439. See Fr.George Hoffmann, *Epistolae Pontificiae ad Concilium Florentinum Spectantes*, vol. 2, Epistolae pontificiae de rebus in Concilio Florentino annis 1438–1439 gestis. Concilium Florentinum Documenta et Scriptores, series A. (Rome: Pontifical Institute for Eastern Studies, 1944), nr. 206, pp. 97–98. In 1443 Eugene made Torcello an "Apostolic Knight" (*Epistolae Pontificiae ad Concilium Florentinum Spectantes*, vol. 2, pp. 85–86). At the same time he is described as a citizen of Constantinople (See Setton, *Papacy and the Levant*, p. 69). The Pope availed himself of Torcello's service throughout these years, as is shown by his correspondence (Ibid., nr. 243, pp. 17–21), as well as payments made to him (Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol.2, p. 22). In July of 1443 he is still listed as speaker for the Byzantine Emperor. Indeed, he served as a Byzantine emissary (Jorga, *Notes*, vol. 3, p. 83) in 1442, for drumming up support in Hungary and Rome for a crusade. For more information on Torcello's role as papal and Byzantine agent, see Setton, p. 69.

[97] The speech is appended to Brocquière's account of his travels, pp. 263–266.

Brocquière to critique Torcello's ideas. In some respects Torcello's plan is sound and reveals a number of points that were later adopted by (or rather coincided with the independently arrived at ideas of) the planners of the expeditions in 1443 and 1444. The author accurately mentions two of the main routes through the Balkans, one leading out of Belgrade, which was used by the crusaders in 1443, and another from Vidin which was used in 1444.[98] He also suggests that it might be helpful, though not absolutely necessary, to have twenty ships block the straits. He correctly identifies possible sources of support—Wallachians, Serbs, Byzantine Morea and the people of Rumelia—albeit to a completely unrealistic degree.

This lack of realism manifests itself in other places. He writes that Croatia, Hungary, Bohemia and Germany, "all of which neighbor the Turks (sic!)," could field an army of 100,000 men. "Given the condition of Greece, and if the men-at-arms march in the manner stated, then the whole enterprise, with the grace of God, will be finished within a month." For the next stage, i.e. the conquest of the Holy Land, Greece (it is not clear whether he is referring to the Balkans or merely Byzantium) could supply another 100,000 men and 100 galleys! This would likewise take about a month. In short, the conquest of all of Ottoman-controlled Europe and the Mameluke-controlled Levant would take about two months. The Long March of 1443 lasted over twice this long, and did not even succeed in accomplishing the first goal.

It should be noted that the supposed ultimate goal of the expedition, the liberation of Jerusalem, was included in Torcello's address merely in order to heighten its appeal. His real concern was the reconquest of the Balkans. He describes in relative detail how Greece should be retaken, but regarding Jerusalem he only cites the number of days it would take to get there and an exaggerated number of men and ships the Byzantines could provide. By framing the re-conquest of the Balkans in terms of a broader crusade to liberate the Holy Land he was playing to his Western audience. Such references were viewed as necessary for drumming up fervor and the participation of otherwise disinterested Western princes, for whom liber-

[98] Torcello sees all of these routes being used at once, by separate contingents. He mentions a third crossing point, "La Pedra," but it is uncertain to what this refers. Since he mentions that the group crossing there will be joined by Wallachians, it may be that he envisions a crossing in Wallachia, and that this portion of the army will pass through the mountains near the Bulgarian village of Kamen (meaning "rock" or in its Florentine form "La Pedra"). It could also refer to Kamenica, a well-known crossing point near Florentin just south of modern-day Mihajlovac.

ating the Balkans captured the imagination far less than recovering the Holy Land.

Kaspar Schlick, one of the most accomplished statesmen of his time and a practitioner of fifteenth century *realpolitik* in the Habsburg chancellery, informed Cesarini a few years later of the need to tie the expedition to the liberation of Jerusalem in order to win over wider support.[99] There is no indication that Cesarini made any attempt to do this, for he saw the solidarity of Christendom as reason and motivation enough. References to the liberation of Jerusalem were noticeably absent from the cardinal's aforementioned speech to the Greeks at Basel, despite the fact that such ideas figured prominently in other speeches given at the council, such as the Abbot of Clarevallis' address and Torcello's *aviso*. But again, there is little indication that any of the involved parties saw Jerusalem as a viable goal at this stage; the idea was bandied about by preachers and propagandists mostly to fan enthusiasm and raise funds. Neither Hunyadi in his campaign letters to Hungary nor the important chroniclers—Thuróczy and Długosz[100]—mention any plans to march on to Jerusalem. Even the prisoners seized by the Ottomans in 1444 informed the sultan directly that the goal of the expedition was Edirne.[101] They made no mention of the Holy Land.

In 1442, while the council was winding down, another even lengthier treatise was presented to the pope by a certain Beltramus de Mignanellis.[102]

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[99] Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *Der Briefwechsel des Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini*, vol. 2, ed. by Rudolf Wolkan. (Vienna, 1909). Hereafter referred to as Wolkan. In vol. 2, nr. 88, pp. 144–150. Schlick writes: "Scio, quia Minervam doceo, sed non obest. Magna res Hungaria est, multos viros habet multasque vires, sed ad pellendum Teucros Europamque vindicandam majori potentia opus est. Nec vos id inficiamini, qui et Germanos concurrere cupitis et Italorum classem. Sed mihi non possum persuadere, tantam rem per litteras posse concludi. Ideo videre vellem, reverendissimam paternitatem vestram principes nostros adire cum mandatis et bullis apostolicis et eorum, qui consentiunt, litteris, quo casu nedum de passagio ad Greciam ex unguibus Maumetti sed Asiam quoque liberandam sperarem."

[100] Długosz suggests that Wladislas simply saw himself simply as the liberator of Europe, attributing to him the following phrase: "Credo in Deum meum, quod Europe populos per manum meam liberabit." / "I believe in my God, that he will liberate the peoples of Europe by my hand."

[101] Gazavât, p. 44.

[102] The following biographical info appears in Hoffman, *Fragmenta*, vol. III, part 2, pp. XL-XLI. Beltramus was born of a noble family in Siena. He was learned in various sciences: mathematics, philology, history, oratory. and traveled in Europe, Africa and Asia. In 1416 he wrote a book about Tamerlane's second expedition into Syria titled Ruina Damasci. He described the life of the Sultan of Egypt and composed a book comparing the Hebrew and Arabic psalters with the Vulgate. The Florentine Cardinal Johannes Dominicus (1408–1419) brought Beltramus along on his legations to Bohemia and Hungary. He served

Beltramus had lived in the Near East for quite some time and was fluent in Arabic and Hebrew and likely Greek as well. His treatise reflects his own priorities. He was more concerned with the overthrow of the Mamelukes and issues concerning the Christians of African and the Levant than the Greeks, though he does not fail to mention the latter as well. He mentions that a crusade is needed in order to build upon and maintain the firmly laid foundations of union with the above churches. To fund the crusade, it is necessary to sell indulgences and win the support of the Christian princes. Such issues of finance and trade occupy a prominent place in his treatise. He states that the Mameluke sultan earns 600,000 ducats a year from his trade with Christian states. If this were cut off, it would cause enormous damage to the Mamelukes. Even more damaging would be to cut off trade with Caffa, the source of the empire's slave army. As an alternate route for Christian merchants, who would no doubt rebel against such measures, he argues that the same spices and other products could be brought to Europe via the Byzantine city of Trapezunt, and he describes this route in detail.

Discussion of the crusade, while important to the larger issue of union and a persistent subtext to the ongoing discussions, nevertheless took a back seat to debates over the specific tenets of faith dividing the two churches. Everyone could agree on the importance of waging war against the infidel; theological issues proved more divisive. Among these were questions regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit, purgatory, the Eucharist and of course the primacy of the pope.[103] Yet even these were eventually overcome. On July 6, 1439, after months of negotiations and theological haggling, Cesarini mounted the pulpit of the Cathedral in Florence[104] to read out the Act of Union. Upon finishing, he asked the pope if he agreed, and Eugene replied *placet*. Cardinal Bessarion of the Byzantine delegation read out the Greek version, and when he asked John VIII if he agreed, he replied in kind. One of the Greek delegates, Mark Eugenicus,

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as Arabic interpreter at the council of Florence, when the Coptic Patriarch John XI and Nicodemus abbot of Jerusalemite Ethiopia came to Florence. (1441–1442). In 1442, Beltramus, on account of his unique experience and knowledge, was ordered to write the above brief treatise (Hoffman, *Fragmenta*, Vol. III, part 2, pp. 81–87) for the pope concerning the Near East and a possible expedition against the infidels. After Hunyadi's victories in 1442 a small addendum was added to the document incorporating Hunyadi's recent victories.

[103] These issues have been the focus of most scholarly work on the council. See Gill, *The Council of Florence*, pp. 131–304, for a relatively thorough discussion of these topics.

[104] The council had been moved here in January of 1439, ostensibly on account of the plague. See Gill, *The Council of Florence*, pp. 173–180.

refused to sign, a fact that would haunt the process of union later, but at the time it did not seem a major obstacle. The pope had numerous copies made, impatient to communicate his achievement to Christendom.[105]

Eager to fulfill his part of the bargain, Eugene lost no time now in trying to effect the crusading project. The next day, on 7 July, he sent out a number of letters informing princes, kings and universities of the union. In the version intended for the princes of Europe plans and exhortations to crusade featured prominently.[106] In this letter he also announced his intention, in accordance with the plan put forth by Torcello, to put together a land army and a fleet to undertake the expedition the following spring. He appeals to the princes to contribute money and material (*opem et operam*) to the project, thereby winning fame for themselves and demonstrating that they are equal in piety to their forebears. Two months later the pope laid out his plans more explicitly in a letter to John VIII,[107] no doubt meant to reassure the emperor as much as to inform. Perhaps Eugene had heard that John and the Greeks had received a cold reception back at home for their perceived treachery, and perhaps John VIII had himself warned Eugene that the Greeks would not accept the union if military assistance were not forthcoming. This subtext appears in the pope's letter, where the strengthening and successful continuation of the union is linked to the liberation of the Balkans.[108] Eugene goes into specifics how he will accomplish this liberation. That next March he will dispatch ten galleys to Constantinople for the space of a year, or twenty galleys for six months. If needed, these will be sent even if the land expedition does not materialize.

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[105] See Gill, *The Council of Florence*, pp. 297–298.

[106] On the crusade, Eugene writes: "With divine inspiration we now intend to prepare a fleet and land forces for next spring, whereby He who began in us this good work [of union] will bring it to fulfillment and through our work the Catholic fold will be quickly and benignly delivered from under the yoke of miserable slavery. We believe that this affair will easily and joyfully take place through the care and contributions of the remaining Christian princes. Gird yourselves, my sons, and with ardent desire flock to this mission of piety, from which you will find glory in your time. And in the future you will merit to be counted among the pious and faithful princes who from the beginning pleased God. We will beseech you further through other letters and emissaries, not doubting that you will show yourselves equal to the nobility and piety of your forebears." Hoffman, *Epistolae Pontificiae*, pp. 81–86. For an example of one of these letters addressed to Frederick of Austria (who would later become Holy Roman Emperor after Albert's death) see Fejer, pp. 344–347.

[107] Hoffmann, *Epistolae Pontificae*, pp. 110–113.

[108] Ibid., "nos, qui non solum ipsam [unionem] effectui demandari tota mente peroptamus, sed etiam eo perpetua stabilitate firmari ac etiam dilatari, quo crucis dominice inimicis a christifidelium finibus eliminatis in pacis quiete ac secura libertate ipsi christifideles debitum possint domino reddere famulatum, cognoscentesque eundem tue sernitati inesse affectum."

Furthermore, the papacy will provide for 300 crossbowmen and two galleys from the moment of John's arrival back in Constantinople until the appearance of the promised fleet, or, if required, until the successful prosecution of the crusade.[109] Despite his intentions, Eugene would soon learn the ease with which promises of crusade could be made and the difficulty with which they were realized.

In the same letter Eugene wrote that Albert II was to play the lead role[110] in the land expedition: "We will also solicit with great insistence our dear brother in Christ Albert, King of the Romans, Hungary and Bohemia, that he might lead an army from Hungary against the Turks... We will try as hard as possible to ensure that the King of the Romans will be personally present for this expedition." Eugene then dispatched the Archbishop of Taranto and soon-to-be Cardinal Giovanni Berardi to deal specifically with Albert on this issue.[111]

In the meantime the Turks had launched an invasion into Transylvania and a series of devastating raids into other parts of Hungary. The peace which Albert and Wladislas had finally agreed upon in 1439 freed up forces to march from Austria to Hungary in an attempt to relieve the Serbs at Smederevo, then under siege by the Turks, as well as deal with akinji raids into Hungary. It is unknown whether Berardi or the letter ever reached Albert, who had moved from Vienna into Hungary to deal with the Ottoman onslaught. This threat proved more convincing than Berardi could have been himself. In a letter from July, Albert not only asked the council of Basel not to proceed in its split with the papacy on account of the need for Christian Unity in face of the Ottoman threat,[112] he went a step further and

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[109] These are no doubt the same galleys and crossbowmen which had been delivered contingent on the emperor's arrival at Basel. The two galleys were still present in 1444, flying the Byzantine flag. They were engaged (and sunk) by the Ottomans during Murad's crossing (see chapter seven).

[110] The pope makes references to these plans later on in a letter of instruction to two papal nuncios attending the Imperial Election in Frankfurt in January 1440 (*Deutsche Reichtagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III* (*1440–1441*), pp. 200–202). They are to remind the newly elected king of the plans laid in 1439: "... After the union with the Greeks we offered large and ample support to their Emperor by land and sea in order to expel the Turks from Greece and Europe. For this purpose we beseeched the late King Albert of the Romans of glorious memory to organize and look to this matter and to lead an army against the Turks. We had likewise decided to prepare a grand fleet at the same time with the help of the Christian princes to be given over to the Greek emperor, that he might lead an army from Constantinople against the aforementioned Turks."

[111] *Deutsche Reichtagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III* (*1440–1441*), p. 479.

[112] Ibid., nr. 109, p. 207.

urged them to send the princes of Christendom to the assistance of beleaguered Hungary.[113]

Such assistance never came, not even from his own subjects who despite their promises barely responded to the summons of the feudal levy. Albert's frustration at the army's impotence as well as his own determination to rectify the situation are evident in the decree he issued at Tüdorév just before his departure from the field. He begins by expressing his disappointment with the feudal levy, and then states that he will lead a massive army composed mostly of paid mercenaries against the Turks the following spring.[114] He will personally head the expedition, bringing along as many of his relatives and friends as possible. He will also draw resources from his other dominions for the crusade. This was the campaign Eugene had been waiting for. Albert needed the crusade of 1440 to redeem his army, bolster his image as emperor of Christendom and save his kingdom from the Turkish onslaught. Eugene needed the crusade to demonstrate to the Byzantines that the union had not been in vain, and to further marginalize the conciliarists at Basel and their Anti-Pope Felix V. The interests of the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor seemed clearly aligned. An expedition for the following spring under the aegis of the Holy Roman Emperor seemed not only possible but inevitable. Unfortunately Albert died of dysentery a few days later. Hungary descended into civil war over his succession. The promised expedition would not take place for another three years.

[113] Ibid., p. 236.
[114] Fejer, pp. 344–347.

CHAPTER TWO

THE REIGN OF MURAD II AND RENEWED OTTOMAN EXPANSION

Late in 1437, perhaps after the death of King Sigismund of Hungary, Murad addressed his court: "'Who from among my subjects knows the roads of Hungary?'" Ali Bey, the marcher lord of Vidin, replied:[1] "'My sultan! If you would be so generous, let me, your slave, answer your call. I will investigate all the roads and counties.'" Murad asked Ali Bey to take the armies of Rumelia and Anatolia with him, but the marcher lord replied that his own akinji raiders were sufficient. After one month of looting and pillaging he reported back to the sultan, "'My sultan! Hungary is a most glorious kingdom and befits you. Is it not shameful that an infidel should be lord of this kingdom?'" The sultan replied in response: "'May God assist us!' And he thus resolved to cross over into Hungary."[2]

The passage above presents in rather dramatic style the Ottoman decision to annex Serbia and begin direct aggression against Hungary.[3] The reasons for this decision are the topic of this chapter. Political developments were among the immediate causes, four of which deserve mention. The first two occurred in Europe outside Ottoman borders—the Council of Florence and Sigismund's death; the latter two were the result of developments within the empire and in Asia—changes in the Imperial Council

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[1] This scene appears in Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 131. Although the sultan's and Ali Bey's words are not to be taken literally, the underlying sense of the episode is clear. There is some controversy as to when Ali Bey's raid took place. Some Ottoman sources state that it happened in 1440 (Friedrich Giese, ed., *Die altosmanischen anonymen Chroniken*, part 1, Text und Variantenverzeichnis (Breslau, 1922)), and during this year there were indeed raids on Hungarian territory by Ali Bey and others. This has led some historians who rely primarily on Giese's work and the translation into Hungarian by Thúry to date the above speech to 1440 and see it as a diversionary tactic for the siege of Belgrade. Yet Aşıkpaşazâde clearly states that the event took place just prior to Murad's assault in 1438, which makes more sense given later events.

[2] Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 131. It should be noted here that Ali Bey himself suffered a humiliating defeat from the Hungarians in the summer of 1437 near Smederevo while the Hungarians were returning from their raid on Kruševac. His encouraging words may have been motivated as much by vengeance as bravado. See chapter three.

[3] Bartolomeo di Giano, writing from Constantinople, goes even further in his letter from 1438, stating that Murad "swore, even vowed to his god, that he will not be calmed by any offer of peace until the call of Muhammad is sung in all of Hungary." Migne, vol. 158, p. 1062.

and the resolution of challenges to Ottoman power in Anatolia. There were two ongoing contextual factors that were equal in importance to the political events above. The first was the Ottoman dynastic myth, i.e. the sultan's conception of himself as the leader in expanding the borders of Islam into Europe. From the sultan on down the military class felt compelled to wage war on infidel Christian lands, and it was easy for those favoring war to tap into this compulsion in order to steer Ottoman policy in a more expansionist direction. The second was Ottoman institutions. A policy of greater centralization meant a corresponding increase in the sultan's centralized civil and military bureaucracy. These positions were staffed in large part by Slaves of the Porte. The primary source of these slaves was cross-border raiding into Christian territory, undertaken by the sanjak governors of Rumelia, and particularly by a subgroup of these known as the marcher lords. As we shall see, the political changes that occurred and the institutions governing these changes were complexly interwoven. The pages below do their best to untangle this and clarify as much as possible the complex phenomena that resulted in a change of Ottoman expansionist policy, fully wrought by the end of 1437.

The Reign of Murad II

At its inception, the Ottomans comprised but one "beylik" among many other Turkish principalities in Anatolia. Their rapid rise to primacy in the peninsula was due in large part to their geographical position, specifically their position on the border with Byzantium. In the dynamic cauldron that was late fourteenth-century Anatolia—comprised of Seljuks, other Turkic migrants, Byzantine Greeks and Mongols all vying for primacy—it was Osman's zeal for waging *ghaza*[4] against the Byzantine infidels that distinguished him and his men from their peers.[5] Ghaza, or holy war, gave Osman a sanctioned pretext for seizing more and more land from the Byzantines, and for rallying around himself a band of followers motivated not only by the material benefits derived from military expansion but also by a sense of religious and divine purpose.

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[4] In Arabic the word is written غزاة which in modern Turkish transliteration is ğaza, or plural ğazâvât. The term itself refers to the campaigns waged by Mohammed and his followers in the first years of Islam. It is synonymous in this period with the more familiar term of jihad, and the Ottomans used the terms interchangeably.

[5] Halil İnalcik, *Devlet-i Aliyye, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Üzerine Araştırmalar*, vol. I (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), p. 10.

In Islamic legal traditions the world is divided into two regions, the "Abode of Islam" (دار الاسلام) and the "Abode of War" (دار الحرب).[6] War amongst Muslims within the Abode of Islam was/is forbidden.[7] War with those outside of the Abode of Islam and within the Abode of War was not only permitted it was considered an obligation incumbent on the Islamic community as a whole, i.e. the Muslim community was to continually support a group of Muslims fighting for the faith in an ongoing *jihad*. Should the Abode of Islam itself be attacked, then the above duty shifted from the community in general to each individual able-bodied male within the community. The first type of jihad was ongoing throughout the years covered in this work, and it manifested itself in the form of annual raids undertaken by the akinji and the marcher lords. These raids were of a greater or lesser scale depending on the wishes and policies of the Ottoman Porte. Due to the invasions of 1443 and 1444 the second form of jihad became legally pertinent as well, a fact that will be discussed in the chapters that follow.

After Osman's death his son and heir, Orhan, adopted the role of a warlord on behalf of the Islamic community. He bore the title "The Mujahid,[8] Sultan of the Ghazis, Ghazi son of a Ghazi,"[9] and continued Osman's determined pursuit of holy war as the defining role of the dynasty. As Colin Imber writes: "In waging war on Christians, Orhan and his successors were fulfilling the command of God expressed in the sharia, and this idea gave legitimacy to their rule and a *raison d'être* to the state itself."[10] Ottoman works of literature from the time period likewise reflect the ghazi tradition, and this tradition was still very much alive at the time of Murad II. Like Orhan, Murad also used the title of ghazi, and references to ghaza and the ghazis abound in Ottoman sources of the fifteenth century such as Aşıkpaşazâde and Neşri. A whole genre of literature related the activities

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[6] There is a third category put forth by some jurists, the Dar Al-Sulh (دار الصلح), or the Abode of Truce. This covered those states, such as Wallachia or Serbia in the present discussion, which paid tribute to Muslim rulers but were not directly ruled by them.

[7] Though various means were developed of course to avoid this injunction. See for example the discussion of Ottoman relations with the Prince of Karaman below and in later chapters.

[8] Mujahid (مجاهد) is an active masculine singular participle of the noun jihad, denoting one who wages jihad. Ghazi is likewise an active masculine singular participle for ghaza, denoting one who wages ghaza. Just as ghaza and jihad, mujahid and ghazi are for all intents and purposes here synonymous.

[9] I have taken this information from Colin Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth," *Turcica* 19 (1987).

[10] Ibid., p. 8.

of the Ottoman sultan on behalf of the struggle against the infidel Christians. These were known as the Gazavât-nâme (Gazavât being the plural form of the word ghaza), and two works of this genre comprise the most important sources for the events of 1443 and 1444.[11]

The correspondence between Murad and his fellow Muslim rulers are the clearest indication of the dynasty's perception of itself as the champion of Islam against the European Christians, or the yellow tribe (بني الأصفر) as they are referred to in the religious literature of the time. After his seizure of Golubac, the conquest of Thessaloniki, his successful defense of Golubac and the seizure of Smederevo Murad sent out letters to the Mameluke sultans. The letters take on the character of dispatches on the progress of holy war on the northern front, couched in florid poetry and frequent references to the Koran.[12] The responses of the Mameluke sultan are praiseworthy and encouraging, and at times contain references to the Mameluke's own victories over the infidel in that year. The victory over the crusaders at Varna constituted the most significant occasion for expounding on the Ottoman dynasty's role in the ongoing jihad. As Murad wrote to the Karakoyunlu Sultan in Tabriz:

> Up until today, I have exercised my sword with the help of God the Exalted the Blessed in scattering and confounding the infidels who are as low as the earth (may God make misfortune their guide and abandonment their leader). With arrows that pierce the heart and pursue the enemy, I have rent asunder the breasts of the accursed satans (may God exterminate and destroy them and may He not leave a trace of them on the face of the earth). In every year and in every circumstance, the victorious armies of Islam have encountered sometimes the pig-headed Albanians, while sometimes the host of believers have fought those who are full of hypocrisy. Sometimes they have settled accounts with the contemptible infidels of Istanbul, and sometimes opposed the ill-omened Hungarians, who are worshippers of idols, rejecters of the sacred texts and of the consensus, enemies of the religion of the Prophet and deniers of Muhammad's message. Sometimes they made treaties and agreements with the wicked and debauched vagabonds of Karaman, who in truth are the highway-robbers of the religion of God and enemies of the men of faith.[13]

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[11] For a more complete discussion of Gazavât literature see Agah Sirri Levend, *Ğazavât-nâmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Beyin Gazavât-nâmesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1956).

[12] The correspondence with the Mameluke sultan is contained in Feridun Bey, مجموعه منشآت فريدون بك [Mecmua-yı münşeat-i Feridun Bey,] vol. 1. (Istanbul: دار الطباعة العامرة [Darüttıbattil'âmire], 1265 h. [1848 AD]) Hereafter referred to as Feridun Bey, pp. 195–213.

[13] Imber's translation, pp. 189–190.

The last statement in this sweeping justification of Ottoman aggression refers to the more problematic issue of dealing with fellow Muslim states in Anatolia, in this instance that of the Prince of Karaman. During their rapid growth in the 14th century the Ottomans came to absorb most of the lesser principalities of Anatolia, in addition to their conquests in Europe. Ottoman ascendancy was resented and at times even openly condemned. This became poignantly apparent at the Battle of Ankara. Tamerlane, who had embarked upon a great campaign of conquest in an attempt to recreate the Mongol Empire, received at his court the Turkish Princes of Germiyan, Saruhan, Aydin and Menteshe. These had all fled after their lands were annexed by Bayezid, Orhan's grandson, who justified his conquest on the grounds that they had co-operated with the infidel king of Bulgaria, another of Bayezid's vassals. In exchange for Tamerlane's protection and support in regaining their lands, these landless princes agreed to accept Tamerlane as suzerain. He was more than happy to oblige, and invaded Bayezid's domains in the summer of 1402 in order to champion their cause and punish the Ottoman sultan's arrogance. The two great armies met on the battlefield near Ankara. The men who had been under command of the four Turkish princes mentioned above defected upon recognizing their former lords and fought for Tamerlane instead. Not only was Bayezid defeated but he was imprisoned, and died in captivity a year later.

Tamerlane naturally re-instated his new vassal princes in Anatolia—Germiyan, Saruhan, Aydin and Menteshe—in their old principalities. Furthermore, he re-instated the beylik of Karaman, which Bayezid had invaded and annexed only a few years prior justified by the alleged cooperation of the Prince of Karaman with King Sigismund at the time of the Crusade of Nicopolis. The powerful khan died in 1405, only a few years after his victory, and his successors were incapable of holding his vast empire together. Yet the aforementioned princes had regained their dominions and had no intention of submitting to the Ottomans once again. The Ottomans themselves were in no condition to undertake this re-conquest. Their possessions in Anatolia were reduced to a relatively small region in the north, though Rumelia remained under tenuous Ottoman control. A savage civil war ensued among Bayezid's would-be successors—Musa, Suleyman, Mehmet and İsa. This state of affairs was consciously exacerbated by the Christian kingdoms, primarily the Byzantines, who pitted one candidate against another in order to nullify any Ottoman threat for as long as possible.

The *fetret dönemi*, or the "time of troubles," only ended in 1413 when Mehmet, who had earlier defeated İsa, succeeded in defeating and killing

Musa, who had himself defeated Süleyman. This left Mehmet as sole claimant. Yet challenges to his rule continued. Among these were attacks by rival Turkish princes in Anatolia, popular uprisings near Wallachia and several more claimants to the throne. Mehmet spent his remaining years fending off these threats while at the same time attempting to regain the territories lost to the empire after Bayezid's defeat. In 1421 his son Murad, in the midst of furthering the re-conquest by seizing the city of Samsun,[14] was hastily summoned to his ailing father's bedside. Mehmet died before his son could reach the Anatolian capital of Bursa.

Murad II was hounded at the beginning of his reign by dynastic problems not at all dissimilar to those of his father.[15] The greatest cause of unrest was a rival claimant, Murad's uncle Mustafa, who despite Mehmet I's designation of Murad as his successor still had a strong claim to the throne.[16] Mustafa, along with his co-conspirator Kara Cüneyd, entered into an agreement with Byzantium whereby in exchange for military and other support the Byzantines would receive important territories in the straits and along the Black Sea coast.[17] Mustafa had some early successes in Rumelia where he enjoyed the tentative support of the marcher lords. At the Battle of Ulubat in 1422, however, the Rumelian marcher lords dramatically defected to Murad's side and Mustafa was soundly defeated. He fled across the straits to Gallipoli where, with the help of ships he had received from the Byzantines he was able to blockade the straits. In his time of need Murad turned to the Genoese podesta of Phocea, Giovanni Adorno. Adorno had earlier agreed to assist the sultan with his vessels should Murad require it, and Murad now called him on his promise. Arriving at Lapseki with 7 galleys Adorno transported the sultan, along with his troops, to the other side of the Dardanelles.

Afterwards, kneeling before the sultan, Adorno asked that in exchange for his help Murad might forgive some sizeable debts the Genoese had incurred.[18] Murad willingly granted Adorno's request, and having crossed

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[14] See Halil İnalcik's article "Murad II," *İslam Ensiklopedisi*, vol. 8 (Istanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1960), pp. 598–614, p. 598.

[15] See İnalcik, Murad II., pp. 599–601 for a thorough description of this period of the sultan's reign.

[16] The Ottomans had no law of primogeniture governing succession.

[17] After seizing Gallipoli Mustafa reneged on his agreement. This forced the Byzantines to come to an understanding with Murad.

[18] The significance of this will become clear later on, since despite the claims of some historians, it was the Genoese who ferried Murad's troops across in 1444, just as they had in 1422. For more details on this agreement see İsmail Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003), pp. 381–382, 385–386.

the straits he pursued Mustafa whom he eventually caught while the latter was fleeing to Wallachia. There he was executed in the winter of 1422. Murad then turned his wrath on the Byzantines, whom he rightly saw as the fomenters of this unrest, and besieged Constantinople. He was forced to break off the siege when another Mustafa, this time his little brother, made a run for the throne and besieged the Anatolian capital of Bursa with the help of the Princes of Karaman and Germiyan. The attempt failed, and Little Mustafa was forced to flee to Constantinople. Cüneyd Bey, the Elder Mustafa's accomplice, remained at large fighting Murad with Byzantine support until 1425. It was not until 1426 that Murad's throne was more or less secure.

This rapid and somewhat bewildering account of the Ottoman Empire in the first quarter of the 15th century helps convey its relative insecurity despite an outwardly formidable strength. Yet the Empire was one whose institutions and even *raison d'être* still revolved around military conquest and expansion, and indeed military expansion when properly pursued was a force of stabilization, not destabilization. The best way to go about this conquest was a subject of intense debate at the sultan's court. Halil İnalcik argues that the main reasons for the empire's collapse after the Battle of Ankara and the ensuing "time of troubles" were Bayezid's own policies—on the one hand his move to incorporate formerly vassal states via campaigns of direct conquest and on the other his attempts to consolidate these gains by establishing a unified and centralized government.[19] These practices violated the more traditional method of conquest that the empire had practiced since its inception. The older tradition consisted of first reducing a foreign state to vassalage, and then slowly incorporating the territories through a gradual process of assimilation.

Bayezid had introduced another method—direct conquest. This consisted of first overrunning a land and forcing out its rulers, then performing a census of the conquered territory. This land assessment was then recorded in notebooks or "defters," on which basis lands were portioned out to members of the Ottoman military class. This system by its very nature encroached on the local ruling class' prerogatives and entailed a larger role for the central government possessing the defters.[20] This built up resentment,

[19] Halil İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103–129.

[20] This does not mean, however, that the Ottomans cast aside existing persons and institutions. For the most part, former rulers were incorporated into the system as timar holders, whose territories roughly coincided with what they had held previously. The problem, however, was that the sultan could ultimately dispose of these territories as he wished.

which in a time of crisis might translate into rebellion. Because of the relatively insecure domestic situation and lingering foreign threats which Murad faced—Ottoman pretenders, rival dynasties in Anatolia, the Mongol Emperor in the East and a possible crusade from the West—Mehmet and his son Murad II put aside this method of conquest and adopted the more gradual method of expansion. This changed in 1438 with the decision to annex and incorporate the vassal state of Serbia and embark upon the conquest of Hungary.[21]

The Ottoman Porte at the Time of Murad II

Though nominally all decisions on foreign policy or indeed any policy were reserved for the sultan, in practice they were made by the governing council, or divan. The divan met daily, either in the capital at Edirne or wherever the sultan happened to be. The most important member of the council was of course the sultan himself, although as we shall see Murad rarely involved himself in its debates, merely reserving the prerogative of final decision. The main core of this decision-making body were the three vezirs, one of whom was known as the *vezir-i azam*, or Grand Vezir. Added to these three was the Beylerbey of Rumelia, who in Brocquière's account as well as others seems to have been a standing member of the council when not campaigning. Other members were the Kazasker (chief military judge), the Defterdar (finance minister), and the *Nişancı* (keeper of the tuğra, or imperial monogram). Several secretaries were part of the *nişancı* 's retinue.[22] It was in the council, or divan, that decisions regarding war and peace were considered and decided.

There are a couple of accounts which describe the council and how it functioned at the time of Murad II. The most detailed and important of these was written by the Burgundian spy Bertrandon de la Brocquière.[23] His is an extremely long description, rich with details, but it is worth summarizing here for it shows clearly the relationship between the sultan, his vezirs and the *divan* at the time of Murad II. Bertrandon precedes his description earlier with the following passage:

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[21] İnalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," p. 106.

[22] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, pp. 501–502.

[23] Unless otherwise noted, the following quotations and passages are taken from Brocquière, pp. 186–196.

> There are four men that one calls pasha or vezirs. Basha means captain or director and vezir means counselor. These four have this duty and no one speaks to the sultan unless it is through them. They have complete control over his government and household. And the Beylerbey of Rumelia controls the offices of the others when they are at war in Anatolia...[24]

He then gives an eyewitness account of an embassy to the Porte, that of his acquaintance, the ambassador of Milan. The ambassador first requested an audience with the vezirs. This was refused because "they had been in the company of the sultan and were quite drunk." He and Brocquière then visit the vezirs one by one, bringing presents to each of them, as well as for their servants guarding their respective doors. The next day he is told to report to the sultan's "Porte."[25] This he does, and after passing by a group of 30 or so baton-wielding slaves who guard the Porte, named *kapıcılar*, he is made to wait for the sultan, who holds court "every time an ambassador comes to see him, and that is nearly every day." Soon after Murad II enters from his private quarters with "a dwarf and two boys who act as clowns" trailing behind him, whereupon he is greeted by the Beylerbey of Rumelia (Halil Pasha). The sultan passes through the chamber and mounts several steps to a gallery, where he takes his seat "in their manner, like one of our tailors when he is sewing." The vezirs are seated separately, but near him in the gallery, and other high officials line the gallery walls. A number of Wallachian noblemen, residing at the court as hostages, are seated outside of the gallery across from the sultan. At least a hundred tin platters each

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[24] Brocquière, p. 183. He gives the number of vezirs as four, not three, since he includes the Beylerbey of Rumelia as a vezir. Compare this with a similar passage in Mihalović's Memoires of a Janissary: "The imperial council is the highest and most distinguished over all the imperial power. And what they decide is carried out. And they are called in the Turkish language vezirler and bassalar... And during this time when I was in Turkey at the court of Emperor Mahomet, Machmutbassa was one and Ysakbassa was the other... " Mihalović mentions only two vezirs. Indeed, for the year 866 h. [6 October 1461–25 Sep 1462 AD] Oruç Bey cites two vezirs, their names are Mahmud Pasha and Ishak Pasha. These two held the office it seems until 1468. Mahmud Pasha held the office off and on after that until his isolation from court in 1474. This may be important in dating the information in Mihalović's work, and suggest he is reporting on the Ottoman State as it was in the last year or two prior to his escape from captivity. In any case, not only Brocquière, but Oruç Bey confirms that there were usually three vezirs during Murad's reign.

[25] I have left the word "porte" (in Turkish "kapı," and in English "door/gate") untranslated, since Brocquière himself uses it to highlight the curious nature of the term, and since it often appears in Anglo-Saxon literature of a later date with precisely this spelling to describe the sultan's court and government. Brocquière's mention of the term here may indeed be its first appearance in western literature. In short, it is a metonymous term for the sultan's palace/household/court, the definition which Brocquière himself gives. At this point in Ottoman history the porte was wherever the sultan was currently residing.

filled with rice and a piece of lamb have been laid out in their midst. The first to be presented to Murad is Radivoj, the Ottoman protégé in Bosnia. Then Brocquière's acquaintance, the ambassador of Milan, is brought forward. His gifts for the sultan are held aloft by servants for all to see. Then the ambassador approaches the gallery and bows before Murad, who in turn rises to greet him.

> Then the sultan stood and took about two steps up to the beginning of the aforementioned stairs and took the hand of the ambassador. The ambassador wanted to kiss the sultan's hand, but the Turk refused on account of the honor of the Duke of Milan. He then asked him how his good brother and neighbor the Duke of Milan was. The ambassador responded that he was very well. Because the Turk did not understand the ambassador there was a young Jew who held great authority with the sultan, who relayed word for word from one to the other the sentences in Turkish and Italian... Then the ambassador moved backward to take his seat near the Bosnian, always keeping his face towards the sultan as was the custom...

Soon after food and drink was brought to Murad, who ate from his seat in the gallery while his guests partook of the food on the platters while minstrels played music. "Then the ambassador left without saying a word regarding his embassy. Such is the custom for the first audience."

Real business, however, was conducted a few days later, not with the sultan but with the vezirs and the divan.

> On the third day, the pashas let him know that they were ready to hear the matter which concerned him. The sultan had already held his audience and had just retired. The pashas alone were there with the Beylerbey of Rumelia. When we passed the Porte we found all four seated outside of the gallery, on a piece of wood. They sent for the ambassador. They placed a carpet on the ground in front of them and he was made to sit there like a criminal in front of a judge. There were numerous people there.

The Milanese ambassador related his mission, which Brocquière learned second-hand concerned claims by Sigismund to contested territories in the Balkans. The council stated it would give its response within ten days. On the tenth day they found the sultan seated there again. But there was no crowd, no food, no Wallachians, no minstrels, "only those people who served [the sultan] food." The pashas and the council were outside quite a distance away, where the Great Kadi (presumably the Chief Justice or Kazasker) was hearing cases. The sultan departed, "and as soon as he returned to his chamber the pashas, seated as before on the piece of wood, summoned the ambassador." They relayed to him Murad's response, which was that the sultan had no intention of yielding any of his lands and "that

he had often put off the conquest of Hungary, which he could easily accomplish if he wanted... because at this time neither he nor his people had any other country to occupy their attention other than the lands of the said emperor (Sigismund)" who had been repeatedly defeated by both Murad and his predecessors in the past. Having received his response the ambassador departed.

Brocquière's account strongly suggests that real power and authority rested not with Murad, but with his divan or council. This depiction is bolstered by the reports of another westerner, Cyriac of Ancona. Cyriac, as we shall see later, was acting as a papal informant during the time of Wladislas' negotiations with the sultan in the summer of 1444. In a letter from May 22 he relayed the ceremonial acceptance of an embassy by the sultan which more or less matches Brocquière's depiction.[26] Soon after in another letter he describes the Hungarian delegation and the famous proceedings from the summer of 1444 (see chapter seven):

> Two days later [the delegation] entered the proud presence of the tyrant ... and presented letters of credence written in Latin, Greek and Serbian, and each presented his modest gift to the great prince. On the next day, they dealt with the group of royal pashas on the substance of the important embassy.[27]

The depiction of Brocquière from 1433 and that of Cyriac from 1444 suggest the sultan played an almost ceremonial role in the central government. Though Murad would receive embassies with pomp and ceremony, real negotiations took place within the divan, which, in Brocquière's account, purposefully waited until the sultan was absent to discuss the Milanese ambassador's embassy. The *Gazavât* supplements these accounts in an important way. Regarding the same Hungarian embassy of 1444 which Cyriac mentions above, the author of the *Gazavât* writes:

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[26] "[On the 21st of May] I ascended to the royal palace of the sultan, Prince Murad Bey, the great King of Asia, along with my friends ... The royal door opened to an enormous hall full of vast brilliance and pomp, and, around the room, a great throng of magnificently exotic courtiers and the king, seated on carpets strewn in the usual manner, with his leading men and distinguished princes, and beside him, his son Çelebi, in the splendid manner of exotic royalty." He then describes gifts given by Ismail Bey of Sinop and by a certain Francesco, a person familiar to Cyriac. "At length, servants brought to the king and his barbarian [courtiers] luxurious dishes of food in polished vessels [set] on this side and that; soon, though, cups drained and food devoured, the throng left the hall." Cyriac of Ancona, *Later Travels*, pp. 34–37

[27] Cyriac, p. 37.

> When the Padishah had heard the [embassy's] letter, the embassy presented the gifts that it had brought and then left the imperial council. His majesty the Padishah the Refuge of the World looked directly at the Pashas and said: "What do you say to this? The infidels have asked for peace, but demanded Semendire (Smederevo). What would you do about this?' To this the Pashas replied: 'This is not like other matters. Summon a council to bring together the janissary officers and all men of affairs, great and small. Let them discuss the matter... Nothing can be decided until all this has been discussed."[28]

Unfortunately the following page of the *Gazavât* manuscript, which would presumably relate this discussion, is missing. The text resumes, however, with Murad stating, "It would be wise to accept the peace at an early stage and to strengthen the bargaining position." This is shown as the final word in the matter. The *Gazavât* thus implies that the sultan preferred an indirect role in the discussions, relegating the fundamental parts of the decision-making process to the council and other officials. Nevertheless, in extremely sensitive matters, he reserved the final decision for himself. It would seem that Murad assumed a similar role in decision-making while on military campaigns. This is clearly reflected in a war-council related by Chalkokondyles prior to the Battle of Zlatitsa. Though Murad argues his own opinion he clearly listens to the ideas of his other officers, ultimately adopting one of their suggestions over his. Yet it is clear that the ultimate decision lies with him.[29]

This depiction of Murad as relatively aloof from the day-to-day functions of government but still aware of his authority is in keeping with other information about his personality. In terms of his physical appearance he was "large in build but short in size, with a rather large face and Tartar features. He has a large, round nose and rather small eyes, is dark in com-

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[28] Gazavât, p. 32 (Imber's translation, p. 70)

[29] See chapter six. Though there were some differences between Murad II and his successor, Mehmet the Conqueror, the following passage by Konstantin Mihalović taken from the reign of the latter suggests a similar system of decision-making to the one mentioned above (Mihalović, p. 157): "And also the imperial council does not deliberate in the presence of the emperor, but far from the emperor; and only these two men, and in a different room. If outside, however, a special tent is pitched called the danissik czaderi (danışık çaderi), which would mean in our language "council tent." (There is another great tent where the emperor appears; it is called the segiwan.) Summoning before them familiar men, they ask each individually what is happening where, and having heard all this they write down all the things that anyone has said before them. Then the two of them deliberate, and what is best and most suitable they will take with them before the emperor. And only when the emperor himself, having considered this and having taken council jointly with them concerning what must be done, concludes the council altogether, do they depart from the emperor and order the necessary things. And the emperor himself has charge of that."

plexion, with large jowels and a round beard."[30] Part of the reason for his corpulence as well as his detachment at court may have been his notorious drunkenness and fondness for merry-making. This characteristic is mentioned by both Muslim and Christian historians.[31] According to Brocquière, he promoted Sinan Bey to Beylerbey of Rumelia because of his prowess in drinking; on the other hand he imprisoned an Arab preacher who stated that drinking violated the precepts of Islam.[32] According to the same author, his drunkenness was the cause of another of his characteristics—generosity. Yet Brocquière also reports that Murad placed a great value on justice, and that he was merciful and compassionate towards his subjects as well as pacific in nature, rather despising war. The same is reported by Iacopo de Promontorio,[33] who served on his court for years, as well as the Greek historian Doukas, who further emphasizes Murad's honesty in some brief elegiac remarks.[34] Modern historians likewise maintain that Murad was not a conquering sultan like Bayezid or his son Mehmet, but given more to art and music and pleasures of the court. Yet there is no doubt that Murad was capable of decisive and violent action when the need arose. As the Arab historian Ibn Taghri-Berdi wrote:

> In his long reign he achieved much, won glory and brought prosperity. He became the most powerful lord of Anatolia. He never shied away from jihad, though he was fond of amusements and pleasures. He confronted dangers personally in the path of God, and in this he was indefatigable. He devoted himself to this with heart and soul. It is said that he passed his whole life

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30 Brocquière, p. 181.

31 E.g. Gazavât, p. 7 (Imber's translation, p. 47): "Then the Padishah occupied himself with his own pleasure, eating, drinking and making merry." For the comments of other Muslim historians on Murad's drinking see İnalcik, *Fatih Devri*, p. 59.

32 Brocquière, pp. 183–184.

33 Iacopo de Promontorio, p. 80: "Resto esso Morat in pacifico dominio. Era Signore molto humano, gentile et liberale."

34 Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks, an Annotated Translation of "Historia Turco-Byzantina"*, trans. and ed. by Harry Magoulias (Wayne State University Press: 1975), pp. 188–189: "God, I suppose, judged the man according to the good deeds he performed for the benefit of the common folk, and the sympathy he expressed for the indigent, not only for those of his own nation and impious faith but also for Christians. The treaties which he sealed on sacred oath he kept inviolate and intact to the end. If some Christians resorted to the violation of treaties and the infraction of oaths, they did not escape the infallible eye of God. They were justly punished by the judgment of the Avenger. Murad's wrath was not intemperate. After a victory, the barbarian would not set out in hot pursuit of the fleeing enemy. Moreover, he did not thirst after the complete destruction of the fallen nation, but as soon as the vanguished sued for peace, he eagerly accepted their terms and dismissed the ambassadors in peace. He truly despised warfare and loved peace, and the Father of Peace meted out in turn a peaceful death to the babarian instead of death by the sword."

> thus. He was just to his subjects and followed matters personally. At the same time he was generous, and had an easy temperament. He loved musicians and entertainers. All the musicians from neighboring countries flocked to his side. Yet when news of jihad arrived, he dropped everything and marched forth.[35]

The Kul/Slave Institution

Perhaps the single most important institution of the 15th century Ottoman state, as well as its neighbor Mameluke Egypt, was that of slavery.[36] It was also essential to the Ottoman-Christian conflict of the time, for which slavery was both a means, insofar as slaves served in certain key portions of the Ottoman Army, as well as an end, since slaves served as the richest form of plunder seized by akinji raiders in the incessant *kleinkrieg* waged along the border. Medieval Islam[37] permitted slavery and the institution enjoyed a long tradition among the Muslim States of the Middle East, as it had under the states that preceded the arrival of Islam.

Sharia law stipulated certain conditions that had to be met. Only children of slaves or prisoners of war seized from a non-Muslim polity could become slaves. It was strictly forbidden to seize freeborn Muslims.[38] Should a slave convert to Islam no change occurred in his status, though the eventual manumission of such persons was seen as a praiseworthy act. As mentioned, even Christians living under a Muslim polity enjoyed protection by virtue of the fact that they paid the *jaziyah*, or capitation tax. The *devshirme*, or "collection" of eligible sons of Balkan Christian families for service as slaves at the Ottoman Court clearly violated this principle, though this fact was conveniently overlooked until the late sixteenth century. The most eligible candidates for enslavement, then, were those seized in war outside of the Abode of Islam, or the Muslim polity. As we shall see, this fact is of enormous importance for understanding the Ottoman-Hungarian conflict in the mid-fifteenth century.

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[35] This quote is translated from Halil İnalcik's own Turkish translation found in İnalcik, "Murad II.," pp. 610–611.

[36] See İnalcik, Devlet-i Aliyye, p. 205 and susequent pages. See also Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), p. 128 and subsequent pages.

[37] Some schools of Islam, such as the wahhabists, still accept slavery as a legal practice, though it has been considered illegal by most Muslim states since the nineteenth century.

[38] If one parent were free, but the other slave, then the child would inherit the status of his mother.

The Turkish word "kul," derived from the Persian word "gulam," does not possess the same harsh pejorative meaning as the word "slave" in English and in other European languages. During the reign of Murad II it was the primary means for recruitment into the imperial service, and most of the important ministries, military commands and high offices in the Ottoman regime were staffed by slaves. Slaves comprised the entire Janissary Corps, as well as the six divisions of the sultan's cavalry. The same was true of the various servants at the Ottoman court. These were known collectively as the Kapıkulu, or "Slaves of the Porte." By virtue of their membership in the sultan's household they demanded the respect of the sultan's subjects, whether free or slave.[39] They were paid salaries, and were given authority over other slaves or other subjects so that they might better accomplish the sultan's bidding. They were present not only at the Ottoman Porte, but in the provinces as well. "In short, the 'Kul (Slave) System' was a system which impinged on every echelon of offices of the military-administrative class. They did not constitute an inheritable aristocracy as in Europe. The *has* and *timars* which were granted were not inherited, and therefore such a development was not able to occur, but instead they enabled a sort of centralized bureaucratic control."[40]

After the sultan acquired a slave through one of the methods listed below, they were divided according to those who were fit for palace service and those who were not. The majority of those who were not were prepared for service in the Janissary Corps. Those who were deemed suitable were sent to one of the outlying palaces of the sultan. Here they lived for two to seven years under a strict regimen of learning and physical exercise. Those not deemed suitable for service in the sultan's palace were then assigned to one of the prestigious sipahi cavalry units of the Porte. If they were judged suitable, however, they were assigned to either the Greater or Lesser Chamber of the sultan's palace where their disciplined education, physical and mental, continued. They were trained in the fine arts as well as the arts of war. Some of these stayed on as permanent personnel within the palace. These were known as *hadım*. They were eunuchs, and there were forty of them in the palace at the time of Mehmet the conqueror. They became

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[39] As Mihalović (*Memoires of a Janissary*, p. 155) wrote: "And there is such fear of the emperor among the great lords that if the lowest imperial official should order something to someone, this will be done without fail out of fear of imperial wrath. And the imperial courtiers [Slaves of the Porte], wherever they go, many or few, everywhere they do them honor, in villages and cities—and all that with vigilance.

[40] İnalcik, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, p. 214. In the several paragraphs that follow I have more or less reworded and summarized the lengthier presentation of this subject by İnalcik in the aforementioned work.

responsible for the discipline of the household and education of the remaining pages. The supervisors of the *hadımlar*[41] comprised the palace elite, and they were constantly at the sultan's side.

The palace servants described above comprised the *Enderun*, or interior service. Those whom we already mentioned were sent to the Janissary Corps or the Sipahi comprised, along with others, the *Bîrun,* or exterior service. As noted, the *Enderun* slaves took care of the personal needs of the sultan and his palace. The *Bîrun*, in contrast, served the sultan outside of the palace, which also meant serving in his personal slave army.[42] We have already mentioned one of the *Bîrun* groupings, the Porte cavalry, or sipahis. There were numerous others as well. It was expected that an *Enderun* servant would eventually, every two to seven years, or upon the accession of a new sultan, accede to a *Bîrun* position. This "transferral" was known as *çıkma*, literally a "pulling out."[43] The *Bîrun* position to which one was transferred would correspond in rank to the position he had held in the palace. Thus, the slave of one of the Upper Chambers, such as the treasury, would be promoted to head armorer, and a slave of one of the Lower Chambers, such as the Small Chamber, might become a simple armorer, the subordinate of the former. Furthermore, after some time in the *Bîrun* service, these same slaves could expect to be further promoted to a "provincial," or *Eyâlet* post. Again, depending on rank they might be made a Sanjak Bey, a "centurion" or *subaşı*, or simply be given a landholding, or *timar*. The more important *hadımlar,* or head servants of the palace, could expect, after a lengthy period of service in the palace, to move straight into an *Eyâlet* position corresponding to the most important offices of government, i.e. as beylerbey or sanjak bey.

An example of the above is provided by one of the key figures in the Ottoman court in the period between 1440 and 1444—Hadım Şehabeddin Şahin Paşa, hereafter referred to as simply Şehabeddin. Şehabeddin was of non-Turkish, possibly Georgian descent,[44] and no doubt brought as a pal-

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[41] The overall head was the Kapıağası. Under him were the heads of the three chambers or the hâs-odabaşı, hazinedârbaşı, kilercibaşı.

[42] For a military breakdown of the Bîrun see chapter four.

[43] Iacopo de Promontorio describes this practice in relation to the silahdarlar (Iacopo de Promontorio, p. 31–32): "Tene preterea ciliterler [Silahdarlar], schiavi del Signore usciti del serraglio de meno industri di eta di anni XXV in XXX, de quali cosi come continuo ne extrahe ita de questi extracti ne sparge hinc inde secondo lo ingenio et providentia loro a diversi officij; tamen sempre rimangano a numero 500 vel circa."

[44] Franz Babinger. "Von Amurath zu Amurath. Vor- und Nachspiel der Schlacht bei Varna (1444)." *Oriens* 3, part 2 (1950): 229–265, footnote nr. 89, p. 250.

ace slave into the imperial service at a very young age. His title of Hadım indicates his status in the palace hierarchy (see above), as well as the fact that he was a eunuch. He climbed still further to become the Kapıağası, or Agha of the Porte, also known as the White Agha.[45] He was "the preferred channel for petitions to the throne, giving him the opportunity to influence both the petitions and the sultan."[46] This was the most powerful position for a slave at the Ottoman court, and explains his ability to compete with Halil Pasha for ultimate control of the empire.

As a Hadım in the Inner Palace Şehabeddin had direct access to the sultan's family. He used this access to endear himself to Murad's son, Mehmet, later known as Mehmet the Conqueror. It is not certain whether Şehabeddin instilled in the young prince a thirst for aggressive conquest and expansion, but certainly the two shared this outlook and vision of imperial policy. Şehabeddin's first post outside the palace was as sanjak governor in Gjirokastrës, Albania (Albania).[47] In 1439, after the change in imperial policy described below, Şehabeddin occupied the highest military office: Beylerbey of Rumelia.

As Oruç Bey himself stated, "his fame was (checkered) like a chessboard, sometimes he was the victor and at others the vanguished."[48] Having won several victories in Serbia in 1439, he led a daring but ultimately unsuccessful assault against Belgrade castle during the failed siege of this fortress in 1440.[49] He then won fame as a warrior by seizing several Serbian fortresses, as well as the important fortress and mining center of Novo Brdo in early 1440.[50] In a show of bravado, he vowed to take vengeance on Mezid Bey who was defeated by Hunyadi in 1442, only to suffer a crushing and ignominious defeat himself in the same year. This resulted in his removal from court, but he would appear again in 1444, first in his pursuit of the Ottoman challenger to the throne, Orhan, and then as Beylerbey of Rumelia once again at Varna.

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45 Ibid.

46 Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 153.

47 İnalcik discusses Shahabeddin's career in *Fatih Devri*, pp. 84–85. He figures as well in İnalcik's discussion of Mehmet's accession to the throne and the interior politics of the court up until the conquest of Constantinople, found in the same work.

48 Oruç Bey, p. 63.

49 V.L. Menage, "The Annals of Murad II.", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 39, part 3 (1976): 570–584, p. 577. Oruç Bey, pp. 61–62.

50 The fortress and the city were taken at two different times. The city itself seems to have been taken just after the siege of Smederevo in late 1439 or early 1440. I discuss this problem at greater length in chapter three.

In these years he strove to have Mehmet installed on the throne, but ultimately faced the opposition of Halil Pasha and his ally Kurtçu Doğan, who was the Agha, or commander of the janissaries. In 1446 the janissaries revolted and personally hounded Şehabeddin. After Murad's death and Mehmet's accession Şehabeddin figured prominently once again. His advocacy of the conquest of Constantinople was vindicated with Mehmet II's triumph in 1453. This resulted in Şehabeddin's promotion and the execution of his opponent, Halil Pasha, who had opposed the expedition. As is evident from the above, he was an ardent supporter of the direct method of conquest (see below), and would remain Halil Pasha's main rival at court up until Halil Pasha's death in 1453.

Şehabeddin's career illustrates two important points about the Slaves of the Porte. First, that they were faithful servants, cultivated courtiers and military leaders all at the same time. The Imperial Gardeners, for example, were not only responsible for trimming bushes and selling flowers but also served as the sultan's bodyguard in time of war.[51] Second, proximity to the sultan, more than anything else, proved decisive for a slave's position and importance. Şehabeddin's rise to prominence was directly tied to his relationship with Mehmet.

Not only the sultan, but other members of Ottoman society were slave-owners as well. A slave's status, in short, depended on the household to which he belonged, and the status of a given lord or judge was in turn reflected by the quality and number of his slaves. Some of the more important marcher lords and sanjak governors in Rumelia owned not only household slaves but also slave armies, which they used when fighting on behalf of the sultan or in raids to seize yet more slaves. This practice was very common in the time of Murad II, although in later decades it was eradicated for it gave these marcher lords their own private militias, thus increasing their independence from the central authority.[52]

Compared to the military slaves of prestigious officials common household slaves such as George of Hungary often lived lives of misery. George was seized at Sebeş during the Ottoman campaign into Transylvania of 1438 (see below). Years later he escaped to tell his tale and his account gives

[51] The gardeners are not mentioned by Mihalović, but they appear in later lists of Biruni slaves, such as the one from 1527. See İnalcik, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, p. 211 and Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, p 152

[52] İnalcik, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, p. 214.

us great insight into a number of aspects of mid-fifteenth century Ottoman culture, and in particularly slavery.[53] As George himself relates:

> [At the slave market] the captive is bought and led out and condemned to a life of eternal servitude as a vile slave to some vile peasant... He has no more hope of liberty or of ease, nor consolation nor solace, but to add to his despair he is made to bear all the burdens of the household. And should he commit some error, you will see how he is whipped like a mule and is disgraced with the same tortures as was Christ at the Passion. I will remain silent about the hunger, thirst and shame of nakedness. I will only say this: so great and so bitter is the affliction of this servitude of both spirit and soul, that death itself cannot compare to it.[54]

George's own repeated attempts to escape, despite the horrific punishments to which these attempts exposed him upon recapture, are in themselves a testament to the misery he had suffered.

Between the Slaves of the Porte, the slaves of provincial rulers, agricultural slaves, household slaves, etc., the demand for slaves within the Empire was enormous.[55] Once again, as George of Hungary tells us:

> There is an avidity to possess slaves, since in all of Turkey the opinion is held that whosoever possesses a slave or a servant will no longer want in life... But such an insatiability then takes over that as soon as he possesses one slave he immediately believes that with the possession of another his heart will be satisfied. Likewise from the second to the third, the third to the fourth, and thus into infinity extends this desire, such that many are found who have built villages for servants and slaves and marrying them together they hope they might fulfill their want from their offspring. It is such that no matter how many there should be the value or price never decreases but increases, and therefore the merchants and the akinji raiders make great efforts.[56]

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[53] George of Hungary's experiences as an Ottoman slave as well as his impressions of the Ottoman Empire are described in his own fascinating account titled *Tractatus de Moribus, Condictionibus et Nequicia Turcorum*. This was recently reprinted in Latin with an accompanying retranslation into German (Martin Luther was the first to do so) by Reinhardt Glockow, *Tractatus de Moribus, Condictionibus et Nequicia Turcorum* (Köln: Böhlau, 1994).

[54] *Tractatus*, p. 198.

[55] İnalcik writes that by the sixteenth century the number of slaves provided annually was between 7,000 and 8,000, of these 3,000 were supplied by the devshirme. İnalcik, *Devlet-i Aliyye*, p. 207. This was more than the entire population of the Hungarian capital of Budapest.

[56] *Tractatus*, pp. 198–202. One hears echoes in George's account of the social importance of slave-owning manifested in other societies. As Abraham Lincoln related the words of one Kentuckian prior to the American Civil War: "You might have any amount of land, money in your pocket, or bank stock, and while traveling round nobody would be any the wiser. But if you have a darky [slave] trudging at your heels, everybody would see him and know you owned a slave. It is the most glittering property in the world. If a young man goes courting, the only inquiry is how many negroes he, or she, owns. Slave-ownership betokens

As we can see from this passage the demand for slaves was met not only by raids into Christian lands, but also by trade, breeding and, not mentioned here by George, the devshirme. In terms of slaves seized as war captives the Ottoman demand was satisfied in large part by the marcher lords, who conducted raids into Christian territory primarily for the purpose of seizing men, women and children as slaves. Slaves were also taken from among the prisoners after major battles.[57] These captives were either kept, sold, or rendered unto the sultan. The latter, according to custom, demanded a fifth of all plunder seized, to include slaves, and he used these to provide for the Slaves of the Porte. This custom likely began under the reign of Murad I, who used the slaves thus acquired to increase the size of his own household and establish a centralized army.[58] The number of slaves acquired was recorded on the frontier, and then this number was checked again when the raider and his slaves reached Edirne. Aşıkpaşazâde gives a personal account of one of the raids into Transylvania of 1438/39, of the slaves he obtained and what he did with them:

> The Ghazis crossed the Sava and attacked Transylvania... For one hundred akche I bought a six or seven-year-old boy. But for a captive who might serve as a cavalryman they paid one hundred fifty.[59] On this expedition I also took seven slaves and a concubine. That was a lot... One day I went to the sultan. He was generous enough to grant me a captive. After his act of generosity I said: "My sultan! A horse is needed to transport this captive as well as expenditures for the journey." He gave me five thousand akche and two horses. I had four other horses. I came to Edirne with nine captives. I sold three of these captives in Edirne for one hundred akche. From the others I sold two apiece for one hundred, obtained the expenditures and said prayers for the sultan.[60]

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not only the possession of wealth but indicates the gentleman of leisure, who is above labor and scorns it." This excerpt is taken from Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* (New York: Harper and Collins), 1997, p. 441.

[57] Schiltberger, p. 45, describes the enslavement of the captives after the Battle of Nicopolis. Despite the execution of most of the captives, those under twenty years old were spared. Schiltberger was only sixteen years old at the time and became a slave of the sultan.

[58] See Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 132–133.

[59] This refers to the Ottoman practice of buying captured slaves who were suitable to serve in the sultan's Army. By 1493, the price had risen to 300 akches. See Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 133.

[60] Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 134. As in much of Aşıkpaşazâde's work, names and chronology are confused. The raid of which he speaks, given the size he attributes to it, etc., would seem to be the summer raid of 1438 conducted by Murad himself into Transylvania. This would also explain his encounter with the sultan, which took place prior to reaching Edirne. The text follows a sentence about the siege of Belgrade, which did not take place until 1440, and

Aşıkpaşazâde's rather blithe account illustrates the profitability of seizing captives and the importance it played as a form of plunder and income for Ottoman raiders. It also indicates that the sultan was willing to pay for captives deemed suitable for service in the Ottoman armies. In this case the price was 150 akches.

A rather different perspective, taken from the same raid in 1438, is given by the Franciscan Friar Bartolomeo di Giano. He wrote his account in December of that year and he claimed it was based on the testimony of an eyewitness:

> Priests and monks, young and old, were led away in iron fetters tied to the backs of horses, at least as long as they were able to walk. But the rest of the crowd, including women and children, were herded by dogs without any mercy or piety. If one of them slowed down, unable to walk further because of thirst or pain, O Good Jesus! she immediately ended her life there in torment, cut in half... Nor did this perhaps happen just in one place, as one might think, but over the entire course of the twenty days' journey that the aforementioned captives had made and especially in Edirne where outside the dwellings so great a quantity of bodies lay consumed, partially rotted, partially devoured by dogs, that it would seem unbelievable to anyone who had not seen it with their own eyes.[61]

Once they had reached Edirne the slaves were put up for market.[62] Contemporary writers having witnessed these markets wrote about them in rather stark terms. As the celebrated fifteenth century humanist and orientalist Cyriac of Ancona wrote, who himself had traveled often through Ottoman lands: "For on numerous occasions we saw Christians—boys as well as unmarried girls and masses of married women of every description—paraded pitiably by the Turks in long lines throughout the cities of Thrace and Macedonia bound by iron chains, and lashed by whips, and in

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says that the ghazis crossed the Sava into "Eli." Eli likely refers to Erdeli, or Transylvania. Aşıkpaşazâde thus mistakes the Sava for the Danube.

[61] Migne, vol. 158, p. 1059. Brocquière describes another slave caravan from several years earlier (Brocquière, pp. 199–200): "Along the way I ran into around fifteen men and at least ten women who were being led on large chains by the neck. They had recently been seized in the kingdom of Bosnia during a Turkish raid. Two Turks led them to be sold in Adrianople." Schiltberger (p. 44) also states that after the Battle of Nicopolis each of the Ottomans led his own personal captives on a single rope. Schiltberger himself was led on a rope along with two others.

[62] Brocquière describes a similar slave market in Bursa: "And nearby there was another bazaar where cotton and white soap, which is a very important product there, was sold. And there I saw Christian men and women being sold in a very high hall, which is a very pitiable thing to see. They were seated on benches. Those who wanted to buy them only saw the face, the hands, and a bit of the arms of the women." *Le Voyage*, p. 135.

the end put up for sale in villages and markets and along the shore of the Hellespont, an unspeakably shameful and obscene sight, like a cattle market, so to speak. What an enormity!"[63]

War captives destined for the slave markets were seized not only in the Balkans, but on other Christian/Muslim borderlands as well, in particular Poland and Russia where they were captured by Tartars. Christian merchants were essential to ensuring a steady flow of Christian slaves from these areas to Muslim lands. Bartolomeo di Giano decried this practice and the complicity of Christian merchants.[64]

The presence of these markets and the flourishing trade they supported were the cause of a good deal of suffering for those areas which provided the most captives. In Transylvania in 1455 there were still a number of cities and towns that were abandoned and had not yet recovered from the raids of 1438–1439.[65] In the same year as the above-described raids into Hungary, a similarly devastating Tartar invasion occurred in Southeast Poland.[66] The slaves seized by the Tartars were no doubt taken to one of the Genoese Christian ports on the Black Sea or Sea of Azov such as Caffa or Tanais. Also in the same year, the Castilian voyager and erstwhile papal agent Pero Tarfur not only visited Caffa personally—which he described as the largest slave market in the world—he also acquired for himself three slaves. He justifies his purchase via a papal bull that allowed Christians to

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[63] Bodnar's translation in *Cyriac of Ancona Later Travels*, nr. 1.

[64] Migne, vol. 158, p. 1063. The Tartars also have committed and continue to commit in more distant parts the same crimes and ones even greater than those which the Turks commit in these parts. Indeed... they inflict so many evils each day in Russia that not a year passes but that there do not come to Constantinople thirty or more ships full of slaves who are then sold like sheep in Moncastro, in Tanais, and in the city of Caffa, and this is not even a tenth or a hundredth of those who are captured by them. In this year alone in Tanais, so many slaves were brought to be sold (as I myself learned from an eye-witness) that for the price of four, six, or ten florins at most, one could purchase one thousand youths. But, because of their numbers and state of hunger, they were rejected. ...From Cairo, from Alexandria, and from other parts of the East, Saracen merchants come each year, sometimes sent by the sultan, to Caffa, Tanais, and Moncastrum, and to other Christian lands, and in these places they buy Christians from Christians for a great price, carry them back to their own countries in the ships of Christians (since they do not have their own). As a result, not only do they have slaves but they also more easily make more Saracens who will later be enemies of the Christians. O what divine justice!"

[65] See Gustav Gündisch, "Siebenbürgen in der Türkenabwehr, 1395–1526," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire XII*, part 3 (1974): 415–433, p. 425.

[66] Długosz, \ pp. 187–188: "Caesar Tartarorum Sadchmath cum magno Tartarorum exercitu terras Podolie circa festum Penthecostes ingressus, homines more suo in servitutem perpetuam abducere et spoliis terras ipsas afficere cepit; qui eciam vani terroris apparatum, simulacra videlicet humana, equis imposita secum trahebat." An attempt by the Polish nobles to defend against the Tartars ended in disaster.

purchase slaves in the city since it would save the souls of the captive Christians from conversion to Islam.[67]

Tarfur's argument for buying the slaves should not be seen as merely a flimsy justification for a practice that ran counter to Christian precepts. Quite the contrary. In most of the contemporary preaching about the cruelty of the Muslim slave trade the conversion of Christians to Islam was repeatedly presented as a greater evil than the institution of slavery itself. The former may result in earthly suffering, but conversion would relegate the soul to eternal suffering. The impetus among slaves to convert was quite strong. Writers who had lived as slaves in Ottoman territory such as George of Hungary or Konstantin Mihalović—both of whom were themselves converts to Islam at some point—wrote in detail of the appeal of Islam and the numerous conversions of slaves to the Muslim faith.[68] George of Hungary describes this process in great detail, and it forms the core of his account.

The startling number of slaves which were seized during raids still could not satisfy the heightened demand. To meet this, the *devshirme* (collection) was instituted. It had been present in the Ottoman Empire since at least the late fourteenth century.[69] The practice continued on into the fifteenth, and during the latter part of that century it became the main source of Ottoman slave recruits up until the abolition of the devshirme in the sixteenth century. The devshirme was implemented despite the fact, as mentioned earlier, that Islamic law explicitly forbids the enslavement of legitimate subjects of the Islamic polity (though not the "Abode of War"), whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim. The rate of collection was one in forty, or one boy per forty households.[70] These were not only gathered in Rumelia but in Anatolia as well. Muslims were not subject to the devshirme,[71]

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[67] Tafur, p. 133. Later, on the same voyage, Tafur rescues some captives from the Dardanelles coast who have been sold into slavery and are seeking to escape. He does this at great risk to himself, and despite the entreaties of the captain of the vessel that they should simply leave them be. In still another passage (p. 163), Tafur remarks on the number of slaves in the city of Venice, stating that most of the numerous servants in the city were in fact slaves. This indicates that the Venetians also availed themselves of the opportunity to purchase slaves in Caffa and elsewhere in the Levant. For another description of an Ottoman slave market, see George of Hungary, *Tractatus*, pp. 196–198.

[68] This is particularly true of George of Hungary, who dedicates a large portion of his book to this subject.

[69] Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 134.

[70] Ibid., p. 135.

[71] Imber (*The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 136–137) notes a curious exception to this, Bosnia, which volunteered to be subject to the collection after its conquest in 1463 as a means of entering young men into the imperial service.

nor were Turks. The latter rule may have existed because the purpose of the devshirme was to sever any connections the slave recruit may have had with his former existence in order to prepare him for a life of strict obedience to his new master, the sultan.

The slave system, its organization and its sustainment are key to the events of 1440–1444. First of all, the Slaves of the Porte, though numerically inferior, comprised the disciplined core of the sultan's army and they fought in most of the major campaigns from 1440–1444. The make-up of this army (see chapter four), its operations and motivations can only be understood within the framework of the institutions themselves. Secondly, it is not wrong to cite the slave system during this period as one of the principal causes of Ottoman-Hungarian warfare. Outside of economic interests, military interests were served as well. Expansion required armies, and an army required recruits. The cross-border raids and large-scale invasions in the years 1437–1441 all resulted in the seizure of massive numbers of slaves, many of which eventually became Slaves of the Porte. Though it took years to indoctrinate and train these captives, these raiding campaigns not only weakened the Kingdom of Hungary, but simultaneously strengthened the Ottoman military.

It is evident from the campaigns themselves as well as both Ottoman and Christian accounts that enormous numbers of captives were seized in 1438–1439 alone. There is also evidence that a corresponding increase occurred in the number of devshirme recruits. This is found in an oft-cited passage in di Giano's letter, which states that Murad had collected one-tenth of the boys of the kingdom to enslave them for his armies. Colin Imber and others[72] suggest that di Giano was simply exaggerating, misinformed, or perhaps observing a re-introduction of the *devshirme*, which may have ended temporarily in 1402. It is true that di Giano writes about the collection in 1438 as if it were something extraordinary, but more as part of an extraordinary context than an extraordinary practice. Di Giano thought that the sultan was preparing for a siege of Constantinople, though in reality the preparations were for the Ottoman invasions of Serbia and Hungary. He describes the preparations in colorful detail:

> For never in his whole life is he believed to have been so strongly moved and so set upon this [the conquest of Constantinople] as he is now. And the other signs that I have already indicated in the aforesaid demonstrate this. For he has thirty thousand pikes and the same number of hammers and great stakes of iron being prepared right now. What do you think these

[72] J.A.B. Palmer, "The Origins"

> are for? Furthermore, he never eats and only rarely speaks with his men when, with a sigh, the city of Constantinople comes up in conversation. And this is not without good reason since with that city he could easily acquire power over the sea. Add to this, if it is of any importance, that he recently took from all the towns, cities, and castles subject to his authority—which number almost one hundred thousand—one tenth of the total number of Christian boys from age ten to twenty. These he makes his special slaves and arms bearers and— what is worse—Saracens. It therefore seems abundantly clear—to conclude this summary briefly— that the time is now unmistakably upon us when he shall destroy the Christians or be utterly destroyed by them.[73]

Though it is not stated in the passage we can still assume, as do Imber and others, that the one in forty rate was indeed the normal rate of collection. Yet there is no reason to doubt that in 1438 the sultan temporarily raised the ratio to one in ten, realizing that the greater ambitions of the court demanded a corresponding spike in recruits. That the rate of collection in the mid-fifteenth century was flexible and based on demand is also supported by Iacopo di Promontorio, who explicitly states that the collection was meant to make up for a lack of numbers in recruits garnered as war captives.[74] At the time of Murad, it seems war captives still made up the bulk of the recruits.

In summary it can be said that in the Turco-Hungarian wars from 1438–1444 the Ottoman Slave system was both a means and an end of Ottoman aggression. The most obvious end was economic. The demand for slaves continued to grow, and if George of Hungary is to be believed the wealth to be gained from war captives only increased as the century wore on and demand within the empire increased. This made warfare along the Muslim-Christian border, among other things, a profit-making enterprise for the aggressors. From the perspective of the Porte there was a clear military objective as well. The sultan and his advisors were cognizant of the fact that an expansionist policy would require an increase in troop numbers due to increased usage and casualties from among the Slaves of the Porte. The repeated large-scale raids into Hungary, Serbia and Bosnia from 1438–1440 can thus be seen as a corollary to a newly-adopted, long-term policy of expansion. They were an attempt not only to weaken the enemy kingdoms, but to provide the next generation of soldiers in order to continue

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[73] Migne p. 1066. (Italics added to highlight the text concerning the devshirme)

[74] (Iacopo de Promontorio, p. 36: "Poi lo Signore de simili domati [janissary trainees in Anatolia] ne piglia 1500 et mette tra'l numero delli janizzeri et manchandoli preda rape de figlioli de cristiani subditi soi per fino al numero prescripto et manda al giogo ut supra."

that expansion. Given that it took approximately sixteen years to fully train a janissary, the young boys seized in the great Ottoman raids of 1438–1440 would eventually serve this purpose under the reign of Mehmet II the Conqueror, who was able to expand the size of the Janissary Corps and the Slaves of the Porte considerably.

The Timar System and the Provincial Government

In the above pages we have described how the slave system bound men to the sultan, men who were expected to exercise authority and perform services of both a civil and military nature. The second fundamental institution of the empire, the *timar* system, achieved the same result but in a very different manner.[75] From the first years of the dynasty the Ottomans had granted appanages in exchange for military service. However the timar system, as seen in the mid-fifteenth century, was in fact based on earlier systems already in existence at the time of the Ottoman conquest. In Southeastern Anatolia it was based on a Seljuk antecedent. Under this system part of the revenues went to support a cavalryman, whose position was allocated and revoked by the sultan. The other portion of revenues belonged to a private owner. The system in Rumelia, however, was based on the pre-existing Byzantine system of granting fiefdoms, or *pronoia*.[76] Under this system all of the revenues from the allocated land went to support a cavalryman, and the sultan granted and revoked these territories at will.[77]

The Porte seemed cognizant of the danger that these possessions might gradually slip out of its control, as had occurred in Western Europe during the Early Middle Ages, and become the private, hereditary property of a given family. Therefore the defter system was introduced, whereby the various timars and their current possessors were recorded in a defter, or

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[75] These institutions were not at all separate from one another in terms of a "slave class" or a "timar class." Many slaves ultimately became timar holders, and timar holders eagerly offered up their sons as slaves to the sultan.

[76] For the evidence behind this assertion, see Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 194–196.

[77] The Ottoman name for this type of land was Emîrîyye. I use the word timar here in a general sense, to refer to all "fiefs" administered in this manner. I have shied away from using the word "fief," as it calls to mind Western Christian feudalism, which it resembled in some respects but also differed from quite considerably. There were two other categories of land in the Ottoman Empire: religious trusts, or vakifs, and personal trusts. These lands were not under the control of the sanjak governor, and their income did not go to supporting a cavalryman. Therefore these are not discussed here at length.

"notebook," soon after conquest. Surveys were done of the land at the same time to determine the territory's income and the obligatory military contribution of the landowner based on his income. All of this information was recorded in the defters and notes concerning later changes were made in the margins.[78] The defters thus became the primary tool for centralized control over the numerous landed cavalrymen in the empire.

In both Rumelia and much of Anatolia, the purpose of the timars was to provide for the equipment and maintenance of the largest component of the Ottoman army, the Provincial Landed Cavalry or the *Timarlı Sipahiler*. The service demanded was based on the size of the *timar*, which were categorized in three ways during the fifteenth century: a simple *timar*, ranging in income from 1,000 to 19,999 aspers; a *zeamet*, ranging from 20,000 to 100,000 aspers and a *hass*, whose income amounted to more than 100,000 aspers per year. Based on his income, the administrator of the timar would thus be required to muster in time of war a retinue of mounted and fully equipped cavalrymen (*cebeli*).

These cavalrymen would then appear before the governor of his province, or *sanjak*, who was known as a *sanjak bey*. The sanjak governors were responsible for issues of administration, the military and law and order in their sanjak. To cover their expenses they were granted a sufficiently large timar. The sanjaks were further broken down into *kaza*, or districts, ruled by either a subashi or a kadi. When the army mustered for war the sanjak governors brought their contingent to the *beylerbey*, or "Lord of Lords." There were two beylerbeys at the time of Murad II, corresponding to the two provinces: Anatolia and Rumelia. In peacetime the beylerbey was only responsible for managing the affairs of his respective *sanjak*. In wartime, however, he would lead all the troops of the province. At the time of Murad II, the Beylerbey of Rumelia was clearly superior in rank to his counterpart the Beylerbey of Anatolia. He was given a seat on the *divan*, or imperial council, and he was the most important military decision-maker next to the sultan himself. Iacopo di Promontorio provides a description of the Beylerbey of Rumelia's position and responsibilities:

> The Beylerbey of Rumelia, who is the overall governor, is superior to all other sanjak governors, subashi and kadi (judges), has 17 sanjak governors underneath him. These each have their own retinues. He likewise has his own armed retainers, numbering 1500, paid for by himself from his own funds. From within Greece he has an income of 32,000 ducats from various

[78] For more on the Ottoman system of land grants, etc. see Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 194–206 as well as Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, pp. 504–506.

> benefices and other perquisites, the most significant of which is the 4,000 ducats he receives from the sanjak governors. He also grants a multitude of less important offices, which he concedes to whomever he wishes. He is obliged, however, in time of war to bring with him, at his own expense and on horseback, the aforementioned armed men … He holds court at the palace similar in form to that of the sultan, yet in accordance with his rank. He imposes the death sentence and judges any other case for all those in Rumelia and of his province, de jure and de facto. And he does all of this without having to refer back to or seek the approval of the sultan. He keeps two free subashis close by and two kadis to assist in administration.[79]

Iacopo also provides a similar, though less extensive description of the Beylerbey of Anatolia.[80] It is important to remember that the provincial, or *Eyâlet* offices were not hereditary, but assigned by the sultan. In practice, however, these appointments were made through cooperation with the next higher authority, i.e. with the beylerbey in terms of sanjak appointments, or with the sanjak governor for district appointments, etc. A number of provincial appointments and timars were given out to Slaves of the Porte and to Turks from other areas of the empire. Quite a few were still in the possession of the pre-existing Christian elite, who had been co-opted into the Ottoman system.[81]

The Marcher Lords

A group of sanjak governors in Rumelia who figured most prominently in the Turco-Hungarian conflict were the *uc beyleri* or marcher lords. In the mid-fifteenth century these were sanjak governors whose land bordered on infidel territory in the province of Rumelia. Like the sultan they saw themselves as ghazis, or leaders of jihad on the forefront of the struggle to expand Islam. In this respect they were continuing unabated the dynastic traditions of the early Ottoman rulers. They played the most significant role during the first centuries of Ottoman expansion into the Balkans. They were for the most part left to themselves to determine the best way to conduct raids, undertake missions of conquest and defend the border regions. This led to a de-centralized approach to the marches and the marcher lords. By the mid-fifteenth century, the Porte found that it had little direct control over them. Their positions were for all practical pur-

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[79] Iacopo de Promontorio, p. 48.
[80] Ibid., pp. 55–56.
[81] See İnalcik, "Stefan Duşandan Osmanlı İmperatorluğuna," in *Fatih Devri*, pp. 137–184.

poses hereditary, insofar as a single family might control a given region border region for generations. They possessed their own slaves, military retinues as well as akinji raiders. The loyalty of these men was with their lord, who led them in war and therefore provided for their livelihood in a manner more direct than the distant sultan. At the same time, these marcher lords were quite successful in their fundamental mission—continual jihad and expansion of the Ottoman realm at little or no cost to the central treasury. They earned their wages primarily from the spoils and plunder they collected on campaign. Sometimes they were granted new provinces when they led the campaign to conquer it, or a significant fortress if they and their men were the first over the walls during the assault.

Though we have shown above that the marcher lords possessed a great degree of independence, this was a relative independence within the Ottoman system and not comparable to that of many western feudal lords. As İnalcik writes: "Some great Ottoman uc-beyis (marcher lords) in the distant border zones such as Evrenos Bey, Turahan Bey, Ishak Bey of Skopje and later their sons had hundreds of kuls, and the timar-holders in their provinces were much more dependent on them than those in other provinces of the Empire … However, because all the timars were given directly by the sultan, these beys were prevented from becoming feudal lords with truly private armies. On the other hand, having the largest group of slaves, the sultan was actually able to check the beys' power."[82]

Problems did arise, however, particularly during periods of interregnum. Thus, during the Time of Troubles described above the marcher lords supported first one claimant and then the other, depending on a rather capricious sense of personal interest. And when civil war broke out at the beginning of Murad's reign, they at first supported Mustafa against Murad, only later to switch sides at the battle of Ulubat. Yet the sultan needed the marcher lords. They embodied the dynasty's ghazi traditions and legitimized the claim that the sultan was in a state of constant war with the infidel and therefore in compliance with the prophet Muhammad's injunction. Yet their importance extended to large-scale campaigns as well. Since they fought so frequently against the Balkan Christians they were a wellspring of tactical experience and local knowledge concerning geography, language, political circumstances and current events.[83]

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[82] İnalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," pp. 121.

[83] As Konstantin Mihalović, the former janissary, wrote: "Now besides this there are voivodes [marcher lords] appointed by the emperor [sultan] in all regions against the

In the 1430s and 1440s there were essentially four marches. Along the Rumelian border, from southwest to northeast, these were: the March of Tirhala, where the most prominent of all the marcher lords, Turahan Bey, was active. Turahan directed his raids and conquests primarily against the Despotate of the Morea, though from 1441–1443 he operated occasionally along the northern border with Hungary along with his brother Ishak Bey. The second march was Albania where the Evrenosoğullar, or sons of Evrenos—Isa Bey and Ali Bey—were most active. The third march was directed against Serbia, Bosnia and the area around Belgrade. Ishak Bey, Turahan's brother, was the marcher lord of this region. The fourth march was along the Danube. This area was headed by Sinan Bey, who in the 1430s made Kruševac and Golubac his base of operations for raids into Hungary and let Mezid Bey[84] direct raids from Nicopolis or Vidin into Wallachia and Transylvania. After the latter's death at the battle of the Iron Gate in 1442 Mehmet Ferizbeyoğlu, who governed Nicopolis, seems to have gained prominence along the Danube. He played a very significant role in the campaign of 1444. These territories and boundaries were flexible. For example after the seizure of Thessaloniki in 1430 the border area disappeared and the marcher lords transferred their operations to Albania.

When a marcher lord successfully seized a territory and expanded the empire, he would make this newly conquered territory the forward base for operations. Thus Ishak Bey governed and conducted campaigns out of Smederevo after he successfully led the siege against the fortress in 1439. And Sinan governed Golubac after he seized and successfully defended it against a Hungarian siege in 1424.

The obvious reason for residing along the border was to be in a position to conduct future raids to seize ever more plunder and slaves. These raids were not at all haphazard, but were integrated into a greater Ottoman strategy and had to conform to the current military and political policies dictated by the Porte. It was for this reason that a marcher lord had to petition the sultan before conducting a significant raid.[85] Once permission was

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Christians... These voivodes or sandakbegowe look after all the regions and also know what is going on everywhere, in all kingdoms." (*Memoires of a Janissary*, p. 179)

[84] Brocquière lists Mezid Bey (which he spells dyslexically as Disem Bay) as operating out of Nicopolis (*Le Voyage*, p. 208). The editor, in his note, states that Mezid Bey was captured by Hunyadi at Braşov. This is based off the misleading and in this instance rather unreliable account of Chalkokondyles. Mezid Bey died at the Battle of the Iron Gates (see chapter five).

[85] This is evident in Ottoman sources, which usually state that the sultan "granted" a raid to a certain marcher lord.

received, the raid was announced throughout the land and the akinji and others wishing to take part would flock to the marcher lord. Unlike other members of the Ottoman military the akinji did not receive a salary,[86] the right to tax their lands (which amounted to merely enough to sustain them and their livestock) or other compensation for their service. As the former Janissary Konstantin Mihalović wrote:

> [The akinji] live by means of livestock and raise horses, because they expect that somewhere they will call them on an expedition. They are ready, it is unnecessary to issue them orders or to pay them a wage or to stand their expenses. If any of them does not want to go on a foray himself, he will lend his horses to others for half [of the spoils]. If they win some booty and bring it back, they accept it as good, but they bring nothing, then they say: "We have no gain, but we have great works of piety, like those who toil with us and ride against the Christians, because we support one another." And whatever they seize or capture, whether male or female, except for boys, they will sell them all for money. The emperor himself will pay for the boys.[87]

The above passage indicates two important things about the akinji and the marcher lords. First, their position and livelihood was entirely dependent on raiding and the plunder they took from it. This was first and foremost in the form of slaves. Secondly, they considered their profession not banditry, but rather the work of "piety" in pursuit of a holy and sanctioned calling—ghaza. This fact helps to understand the apparent friction between the Slaves of the Porte and the marcher lords waging war along the frontier. The Slaves of the Porte had been taken from their families and communities either through raiding or the devshirme and had severed all ties with their former life. They lived to obey the sultan, but in doing so they felt that they were enabling the cause of Islam. As İnalcik writes concerning the sultan's slaves: "Above all, they were slaves of the Ottoman sultan, forming around him an imperial group and completely dependent on him for all things. They did not consider Anatolian Turks or any other group as their equals. For them, as for the dynasty, Holy War was the highest ideal, a kind of uniting ideology."[88]

This haughtiness was bound to conflict with the no-less-self-righteous attitude of the marcher lords, who also saw themselves as answering the call of the prophet to ghaza/jihad. Although they were dependent on the sultan in terms of their lands and offices their motivation and justification

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[86] Unless conscripted into the army as serahor, see chapter four.
[87] Mihalović, p. 177.
[88] İnalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 80.

to wage war derived from Allah, not the Ottoman Porte. They were obliged to fight not merely for the ruler of the House of Osman, but for the entire Islamic Community. Though they took this duty seriously, they were by no means intolerant fanatics. They maintained close ties with local, non-Christian, non-Muslim and non-Ottoman elites, the natural result of years of direct contact and dealings with the unavoidably integrated life along the border.

The following passage from Sphrantzes' *Chronicon Maius* exemplifies these themes. In 1435 Sphrantzes had been sent by his master, the brother of John VIII , Constantin Dragas, to take Thebes and Athens, whose thrones had just been recently rendered vacant. Yet the marcher lord Turahan Bey beat Sphrantzes and seized Thebes first. Constantine then sent Sphrantzes to Thebes to negotiate with Turahan Bey for the cities:

> When I (Sphrantzes) was ushered into his (Turahan's) presence he received me with expressed delight, and assured me with an oath: "If I had known about this before leaving home to come here, I could have gladly done what you ask because of my love for the despot and my knowledge of you, for I have done this without any command from the great lord [the sultan]; therefore, if I were only at home, I could find many excuses [for the Greek occupation of Athens], but now I have no excuse." Having shown me much kindness and honor, he brought his sons to greet me, and recommended them to me and to my lord.[89]

This passage shows the civility, even amicability that existed at times between Muslim marcher lords and neighboring Christian rulers. It also demonstrates the relative freedom with which the marcher lords conducted their policy, which was as much on their own terms as on the empire's. Another important difference between the marcher lords and the Slaves of the Porte was that the marcher lords could, and did, have families. They expected that their sons would succeed them and they brought them up to do so.[90]

For these reasons the Slaves of the Porte saw the marcher lords as not to be trusted. In their eyes, these men were neither cultivated nor sufficiently selfless and they had questionable loyalty to the sultan. This is apparent in several passages of the Gazavât, for example when Murad chastises the marcher lord Turahan Bey for his conduct at the battle of Nish

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[89] I owe this passage entirely to Kenneth Setton, who translated it in *The Papacy and the Levant*, vol. II, p. 52.

[90] Mezid Bey's son was described in Hungarian sources as his *vicecapitaneus*, or second-in-command (Fejer, nr. 63). Turahan Bey, who was in prison at the time of the Battle of Varna, had his son fight in his stead. (Menage, "The Annales of Murad II," p. 578)

in 1443: "All they [marcher lords of Rumelia] are good for is big words. Remember what they did to Musa Bey. Think of their deceit when they fled to my father and how, when he died and they were carrying his body to Bursa, they produced an impostor and made him their lord... What troubles these were!"

Likewise, the marcher lords had a disdain for the Slaves of the Porte. Aşıkpaşazâde, who had fought along the marches and took part in several of the raids mentioned in this work, harbored a clear fondness for the marcher lords and an enmity towards the Slaves of the Porte. His description of the events of 1442 is but one example. In that year Hunyadi defeated two large Ottoman armies, the first led by Mezid Bey, the Marcher Lord of Nicopolis, and the second by Şehabeddin Pasha, a eunuch and a Slave of the Porte. Aşıkpaşazâde does not even narrate the marcher lord Mezid Bey's defeat directly, only making mention of it in the context of an entire chapter devoted instead to Şehabeddin's defeat. In the chapter, Aşıkpaşazâde describes Şehabeddin as more interested in eating turkish delight and drinking wine than in fighting the enemy. The passage is a reflection of how the battle-hardened marcher lords perceived the effete culture of the court.

> And when the enemy did appear he turned and fled. The Lords asked him "Hey! What are you doing? Come. Let's march against this enemy. Our army is being thrashed." Kula Shahin (Şehabeddin) said: We'll join the fight this evening. In the middle of the night we will take care of it." When night came there was no longer a trace of the enemy... He straightaway began to flee, asking "Where is the Danube? Is it far, or is it near?"[91]

On the other hand not only the Slaves of the Porte but Murad himself harbored a generally negative attitude towards the marcher lords of Rumelia. This began with their willingness to help his rival claimant, Mustafa, but was perhaps more based on the Porte's suspicion of their independence. Though there were other motivations the clearest example of this rivalry during the period in question came in 1443 when Halil Pasha had Turahan Bey, the most prominent of the marcher lords, thrown in prison despite the fact that Turahan had proven himself an invaluable asset to the campaign. Yet his expertise proved indispensable, and within a year Turahan was again released.

In summary Murad saw his personal slaves as more reliable in a time of crisis. Yet he and his advisors were aware that they needed the marcher

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[91] Aşıkpaşazâde, pp. 139–140.

lords to successfully expand the empire. These men, along with the other Provincial Landed Cavalry of Rumelia constituted the largest military contingents in time of war. They were also the most experienced, and their raiding was the primary source for recruits to serve the Ottoman Porte. In other words, the successful continuation of the one institution was dependent on the continuation of the other. The tension between the marcher lords and the Slaves of the Porte would surface several times during the events of 1440–1444. Though Murad and other sultans sought to lessen their influence it was the adoption of firearms and the corresponding rise in importance of the infantry, as well as the pacification of the northern border and increased reliance on the devshirme as a source of slaves, vis à vis war captives, which ultimately spelled their demise.

The Transition in Ottoman Expansionist Policy

Murad's pacific demeanor and affable personality harmonized well with the two most influential vezirs of his reign: Ibrahim Çandarlı Pasha and his son Halil Çandarlı Pasha . Ibrahim Çandarlı effectively controlled Murad's government as Grand Vezir from the 1420s up until his death in 1428. His son, Halil, who had already been a member of the council due to his position as kazasker was promoted to vezir in the same year as his father's death.[92] Halil Çandarlı's origins as a judge and therefore a member of the *ilmi*, or "academic" class, rather than a military slave of the Ottoman Porte, had important ramifications for his relations with the other members of the divan. He was not an avid supporter of extremely centralized government, a government that would be run by the Slaves of the Porte. Rather, both Ibrahim Çandarlı and his son Halil favored the gradual method of expansion outlined above, and resorted to conquest only when the national interest or a foreign threat clearly and unequivocally demanded it. The Byzantine historian Sphrantzes describes this pacifistic attitude during council deliberations which took place in 1437, when a decision was being made whether or not to besiege the city and force the emperor back from the negotiations with the papacy over union. During these deliberations, Halil convinced the sultan to show restraint, hold off from attack and wait

[92] Oruç Bey, p. 59, "When Ibrahim Pasha died his son Halil had been the kazasker. He then became vezir in his father's place. Seyyid Veliyuddin replaced him as kazasker. 832 h. [11.10.1428–29.9.1429 AD]" See also Menage, "Annals of Murad II," p. 575.

until the results of the council of Florence and its effects were clear.[93] The Byzantine historian Doukas says that Halil was known by his detractors at court under the Turkish name *kafırın ortağı*, or "infidel collaborator" and suggests that Halil's friendliness towards the Greeks was to some extent the result of bribery, a charge repeated by others.[94] Yet Halil continued to win influence at court, and became the main champion of slow and gradual expansion until this attitude eventually brought about his downfall after the siege of Constantinople in 1453.

In the first half of the 1430s the other vezirs, Mehmet Ağa and Saruca Pasha seemed to be in accord with Halil's policies. The *kleinkrieg* waged between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire within the buffer states remained constant, but there were no moves toward conquest or territorial annexation by either side. By the middle of the decade, however, the Porte had begun to rethink its relationship with the Despotate of Serbia. Branković kept well-informed about the Ottoman court and was aware of the possibility the Ottomans might ramp up their aggression. He realized the need to placate his southern neighbor and asked the sultan to come and claim his bride, Mara Branković, who had been betrothed to Murad II in 1428.[95] In addition, George offered whatever tribute the sultan might wish in exchange for peace.[96] Given the precarious situation in Anatolia, where Ibrahim Bey had only recently led attacks on Ottoman territory, the sultan accepted Branković's offer.

Saruca Pasha, a Slave of the Porte who had served off and on as vezir and Beylerbey of Rumelia, was given charge of the mission to negotiate an

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[93] Sphrantzes, p. 51: "Everyone agreed with the sultan's plan except Halil Pasha, who argued against it in the following manner: 'If you attack the City your action will cause the emperor to tell the Franks that he will adopt whatever they tell him to do and see the very thing we fear has happened. Give up the idea and watch the emperor's actions. If the emperor comes to terms with the West, we still have our treaties and friendly relations with them. In the future you will act as you see fit. If, on the other hand, there is no agreement in this synod, then the scheme has worked. Accomplish your plans with greater resolution.' Halil's speech dissuaded the sultan from attacking our City."

[94] Doukas, p. 193: "He had always been a friend of the Romans (Byzantines) for two reasons: one, he was affable and gentle in manner; the other, he welcomed bribes. If anyone conversed with him while holding gold in his hands so that light would be reflected from it as from a mirror, he would, without hesitation, banish every harsh word from his mouth."

[95] For more on the betrothal of Mara to Murad II, see Mihailo Popović, *Mara Branković, eine Frau zwischen dem christlichen und dem islamischen kulturkreis im 15. Jahrh.* (Mainz: Franz Philipp Rutzen, 2010), pp. 38–39.

[96] Chalkokondyles, p. 342. The dowry offered by Branković was 400,000 Venetian ducats, or eight times Serbia's annual tribute. He also offered numerous territories along the Ottoman-Serbian border (see Popović, pp. 60–61).

agreement and escort the Sultan's bride to the capital. His Balkan origins and experience formulating policy with the West made him well-suited for the job,[97] and he traveled with an Ottoman delegation to Smederevo in 1436. After arriving at Smederevo Branković showered his guests with obsequities and spared no expense on entertaining the delegation.[98] Saruca Pasha, of Balkan origin himself, enjoyed close relations with the despot, and no doubt profited personally from Branković's generosity. He concluded the peace agreement and escorted the sultan's betrothed back to the capital. There are two versions of what happened next. According to Doukas,

> As soon as they arrived, the nuptials were celebrated with great joy.[99] Murad had previously taken for his wife Isfendiyar, but he longed more for this new bride who was beautiful in both body and soul. When the nuptial festivities had been concluded, Murad cordially dismissed his wife's brothers after offering them many gifts."[100]

Aşıkpaşazâde tells a very different version:

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[97] See Brocquière's description of Saruca, p. 180. "We came across the Beylerbey of Rumelia who was traveling ahead of the sultan, who had summoned him and told him to bring 120 horses. He is a handsome man of good size. He was a slave (*kul*) of the sultan and is from Bulgaria. I was told that he was made Beylerbey of Rumelia on account of the fact that he drinks well. The sultan made him Beylerbey of Rumelia and gave him 50,000 ducats as salary."

The editor of Brocquière's text states that the Beylerbey of Rumelia at this time was Sinan Bey. Yet clearly they were two different persons. Brocquière himself later gives a description of the marcher lord Sinan Bey who controls the area from Belgrade to the Black Sea. According to Brocquière this Sinan Bey, unlike his peers, did not drink alcohol, clearly distinguishing him from the Beylerbey of Rumelia Brocquière met in Greece. He further goes on to say that Sinan Bey will not let anyone cross the river into Ottoman territory "if he does not know him or does not have a letter from the Turk or from the Beylerbey of Rumelia," clearly indicating that Sinan Bey and the Beylerbey of Rumelia were two separate people. There is other evidence that both Sinan Bey and Saruca Pasha held the post of Beylerbey of Rumelia in the 1430s. In Oruç Bey's chronicle (p. 59) he mentions Sinan Bey as Beylerbey of Rumelia in 837 h. (18.8.1433–6.8.1434 AD) and Saruca Pasha as holding, and then losing, the same office in 839 h. (27.7.1435–15.7.1436 AD). Sinan Bey, however, was not the Beylerbey of Rumelia at the time of the siege of Golubac by Sigismund's army according to Aşıkpaşazâde (pp. 126–127). It therefore seems that the office was not held continually but alternately by either one. A similar situation occurred in the years 1440–1444 when the office changed hands several times. It is also quite possible that there were several prominent Sinan Beys at this time, one at Kruševac and another serving periodically as Beylerbey of Rumelia.

[98] See Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 130.

[99] The marriage took place on 4 September, 1436. See Popović, p. 55.

[100] Doukas, p. 176.

> The sultan did not hold a wedding feast, saying, 'Is it necessary to give a feast to the daughter of an infidel sipahi?'" And when they told him what Branković had said regarding the dowry,[101] he retorted: "'Do my wives lack in something so that I should accept his daughter's dowry only to offer it to my other wives?" He accepted nothing. He sent back his dowry. She remained at his side for a while. Afterwards he sent her to Bursa. Isfendiyar's daughter was also at Bursa. He brought her to Edirne."[102]

Though the two accounts seem at first to conflict, they in fact complement one another. Mara was in the beginning warmly accepted, and the sultan's previous favorite, Isfendiyar's daughter,[103] was expelled from court and sent to Bursa. It seems that something occurred at the Ottoman Porte between the autumn of 1436 and the spring of 1437, or in the time period when, as Aşıkpaşazâde states, "She remained at his side for a while." It was during this time that Mara fell out of favor and was exiled while Isfendiyar's daughter was once again returned. Doukas gives an indication as to what this change was:

> With the coming of spring, [Murad] conceived an evil plot against the despot (Branković), his father-in-law. His counselor in this was one of his nobles, whose name was Fazlullah, a maleficent man and an implacable enemy of Christians. At the beginning of Murad's reign he was grand keeper of the Archives. Later, when the ruler recognized his cunning, sharpness of mind, and soberness of judgment in his counsel, and, moreover, his despisement of Christians, he appointed him vizier. One day, Fazlullah remarked to Murad, 'Why is it Lord, that you have not utterly destroyed the enemies of our faith? God has given you this great dominion, and you show your disdain by treating them in a way which is not pleasing to God. You enfold them with benevolent forbearance. As this cannot be the will of God, let your sword consume the flesh of the impious until they revert to the teaching of the one God and His great Prophet. You must know, O ruler, that the fortress (Smederevo), erected by the despot of Serbia, is not to our advantage. Let

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[101] Regarding the dowry, Branković had said: "I did not give this dowry to my daughter. I gave it all to the sultan." The reason for this clarification is that according to Islamic law, the dowry remains the property of the wife as a form of surety in the case of a divorce or upon the death of the spouse. According to Doukas, aside from numerous gold and riches, the dowry included "the greater part of Serbia." Despite his words to the contrary, Branković's ploy here seems obvious, by giving these to the sultan as a dowry, he retains on the one hand his vassal status, and on the other, should Murad divorce Mara or upon his death, the dowry would come into her possession.

[102] Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 130.

[103] Murad had married her in an agreement with the Bey of Kastamonu, Isfendiyar, in exchange for territories rich in mineral deposits.

> it be taken from him, therefore, and it will be useful to us for crossing from Serbia into Hungary.[104]

It is not certain whether Fazlullah's promotion to vezir occurred in 1436 or 1437.[105] Yet his influence at court, as well as that of the war hawks in general, is increasingly visible from 1433 on. The policy ideas of this firebrand preacher were directly opposed to Halil Pasha's. He favored direct expansion and annexation through ghaza. In other words, he supported the second method of conquest discussed above. Fazlullah's motives need not be ascribed entirely to religious zealotry. Having held the office of defterdar, he was in charge of the central government's funds as well as maintaining the main instrument for the promotion of central authority instituted under Bayezid—the notebooks or defters.[106] Under the direct method of conquest, land was annexed, surveyed and parceled out in fiefdoms, or timars. These records were kept by the defterdar, and through them the Porte could award, confiscate, or re-assign timars as it wished. This is why the practice became such a strong, and oft-resented tool of central authority. The defterdar in control of these records no doubt stood to profit greatly from his office, for he also served as the treasurer. This explains the enormous amount of wealth that was later confiscated from Fazlullah in 1444 when he fell out of favor with the court.[107]

The biggest obstacle to the policy of direct annexation was Halil Pasha. Yet he was far too powerful at court for Fazlullah to remove. Saruca seemed a more feasible target if Fazlullah were to find a seat on the divan. Saruca had not only promoted, along with Halil, cooperation with the "infidel," he also advised the sultan in religious matters, serving as his *mukarrib*.[108] Together with Halil Pasha, Saruca had been the architect of Mara's marriage to Murad and the Serbian peace settlement in 1436. It is not hard to imagine that Fazlullah used this marriage, which had resulted in the replace-

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[104] Doukas, p. 176.

[105] Oruç Bey, p. 60, writes that Fazlullah Pasha became vezir in 840 h. (16.7.1436–4.7.1437 AD), replacing Mehmet Aga who had died that year. The "Annals of Murad II" (Menage, p. 576), report Mehmet Aga's death and Fazlullah's accession as taking place in 841 h. (5.7.1437–23.6.1438 AD). According to İnalcik, who cites records from Murad's imaret, or soup kitchen, Mehmet Aga was still vezir in 1440 ("Murad II," p. 612).

[106] See İnalcik, "Ottoman Methods," p. 125 and further. His article goes into great depth about the use of defters as a tool to promote central authority.

[107] See note below.

[108] This title appears in Oruç Bey, p. 59. According to the Redhouse Ottoman Turkish/English dictionary, a mukarrib is a teacher who interpreted Koranic texts in the presence of the sultan during the month of Ramadan.

ment of Murad's former favorite, a Turkish Muslim, with the daughter of a Serbian "infidel sipahi," to attack Saruca at court.

Yet the formal charge that was leveled at Saruca also became the pretext for invading Serbia. It regarded the construction of Branković's fortress at Smederevo. Sometime soon after 1427, when Belgrade was returned to the Hungarians, Branković began building a fortress on this site.[109] According to the Ottoman chronicler Oruç Bey, Branković had asked the sultan if he could build a church at Smederevo, but instead of an ecclesiastical building he constructed a vast fortress.[110] The Serbian writer and former janissary Konstantin Mihalović provides more detailed insight.[111] According to his account, Branković had asked to build a monastery or cloister, but the sultan had in fact granted him permission to build a fortress. This may have been due to Branković's complaints to the sultan about raiding and marauding, which he said had caused a growing sense of insecurity in his lands.[112] According to Mihalović, George made his request to expand the fortifica-

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[109] Konstantin Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, vol. 2 (Gotha, 1918), p. 166, writes that the fortress was completed in 1430, and this also appears in an inscription on one of the fortress towers. Yet this only refers to the innermost portion of the walls, and refers more to the beginning of the fortress' construction. Brocquière, who was in Serbia in 1433, wrote at length about the fortresses of Serbia, including Kruševac, Stalać and Belgrade. He says nothing of Smederevo, but instead says that Branković was residing at Nekoudim, a summer residence very near to Smederevo. According to Mihalović, the fortress was still unfinished by the time of the Turkish siege in 1439.

[110] Oruç Bey, p. 59. The chronicler writes more specifically that Branković had requested from Murad permission to build a church, which was granted. After going to Serbia and seeing that the despot had in fact constructed a fortress, Saruca did not report this information to the sultan.

[111] As a Serb himself, Mihalović was quite familiar with Serbian affairs, and as a former Ottoman Janissary he had their perspective as well. He writes (p. 61): "Then the Turkish Emperor Morat took the Despot's daughter Mara for a wife and asked the Despot to send with her his son Grgor. And so the Despot sent the daughter and his son to Emperor Morat. And in this friendship the Despot asked the Turkish Emperor to allow him to build a monastery or cloister without his hindrance. The Emperor so granted the Despot and vowed not to hinder in this, and still more, [granted] that he might freely build himself a monastery or fortress most industriously and without hindrance. And the Emperor vowed to him to hold to this truly and faithfully. Having relied on the Emperor's vows, the Despot built Smederevo.

Emperor Morat, having heard that the Despot was building a secure fortress or castle, before he had completed it or looked after its supplies, suddenly ordered that the Despot's son Grgur, his brother-in-law, be taken prisoner. And he had him taken to a castle called Dimotika and himself marched with an army to besiege Smederevo."

[112] Perhaps these were raids from the rival claimant and Ottoman protégé, Stephen Lazarević. Mention of Branković's complaint is found in Murad's letter to the Mameluke sultan from 1440 (Feridun Bey, p. 211): "The Lord of Serbia, called Jurgiu, was continually ingratiating himself to us and flattering us. He acted as if he were faithful. He complained to us about the marauding in his country and increased terrorizing [of his lands]. At first

tions at the same time that he offered to seal the sultan's marriage to Mara. These fortifications were near completion but still not finished by the time of the Turkish invasion in 1439.

In any case, Oruç Bey tells us that Saruca Pasha was accused of corruption for having failed to inform the sultan that Branković was constructing a large fortress in Smederevo. In 1436 he was stripped of his offices (Beylerbey of Rumelia and vezir), removed from court, and moved temporarily to the court of the sultan's son in Amasya. The charge seems spurious. The construction of the enormous circuit of walls surrounding Smederevo, which were visible from the river below, would have been impossible to conceal from Ottoman merchants, scouts and raiders. And the Ottomans, known for their reconnaissance and intelligence gathering, could no doubt distinguish between a church and stone fortifications. The purpose of the charge was rather to villainize the Serbs and their sympathizers—Branković, his daughter Mara and Saruca—as well as to frighten the pro-Serbian faction at court. At the same time this would pave the way for a campaign of northern conquest.

Yet Halil Pasha still had great influence at court and his policies of diplomatic engagement with non-Muslim states and indirect control over vassal clients was more in line with Saruca's own politics at the time.[113] Perhaps he was behind Saruca's return to court in the following year. Thus in early 1437 Halil Çandarlı(Grand Vezir), Saruca and Fazlullah were the three vezirs serving on the divan.[114] Yet in the summer of 1437 Sigismund ordered a raid on Kruševac in Ottoman-controlled Serbia (see chapter three). The soldiers succeeded in burning the river fleet used by the akinji to conduct raids and leveled the fortress as well. On their return, despite King Sigismund's orders not to enter Branković's lands[115] (aware that it

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we thought he was being honest, but then we realized his actual situation and we discovered his lie and his ill intentions toward the People of Faith (Muslims)."

[113] Saruca Pasha would later, after Murad's reign, join the war hawks and align himself against Halil. Indeed there is a good chance that his willingness to deal diplomatically with Serbia and maintain close relations with that nation had less to do with a specific policy and more to do with Branković's bribes.

[114] Oruç Bey, p. 60. Oruç Bey lists these men as vezirs in the year 840 h., or between 16 July, 1436, and 4 July, 1437 AD. It is hard to believe that Saruca, who served two different posts in Amasya and at Gallipoli during his exile, could have returned to court in less than twelve months. I therefore assume the later part of 840 h., or sometime in early to mid 1437.

[115] Marczaly reported to Sigismund that they had entered the despot's lands despite Sigismund's orders in his report to Sigismund on the raid. Euzebije Fermendžin, ed. *Acta Bosnae potissimum ecclesiastica cum insertis editorum documentorum regestis ab anno 925 usque ad annum 1752* (Zagreb: Academia Scientiarum et Artium Slavorum Meridionalium, 1892), p. 144.

would invoke the wrath of the Ottomans), the Christian soldiers were compelled by necessity to march through northern Serbia. As they were marching in the vicinity of the nearly-complete fortress of Smederevo they came into contact with the forces of the famous marcher lord Ali Bey. The Hungarians won the battle. Ali Bey narrowly escaped, and the Hungarians seized a number of Turkish banners and captives.

Fazlullah and the war hawks seized the opportunity to hold Branković responsible, seeing this as another sign of the despot's perfidy and double-dealings. After all, the Hungarians had not only marched freely through the despot's lands but they had dealt a significant defeat to a capable Ottoman commander within a short distance of the newly-built fortress capital while the Serbians stood by and watched. The incident played perfectly into the hands of Fazlullah and his party. According to Oruç Bey, Saruca Pasha was once again isolated.[116] Şehabeddin Pasha, perhaps the most zealous advocate of direct conquest and the future rival of Halil Pasha for influence at court took Saruca's place as vezir. At the same time Şehabeddin took Sinan Pasha's place as Beylerbey of Rumelia, the most powerful military command in the empire. The pro-conquest faction had gained the upper hand.

Other events no doubt encouraged Fazlullah and Şehabeddin in their policy of aggressive expansion against the Balkan Christians. The insurrection in Albania had been quelled by 1436. This not only freed up military resources, but also left marcher lords such as Ishak Bey in need of a new border area to conduct raids. By early 1437, unrest in Anatolia had also been dealt with. Furthermore, a sense of threat was felt at the court on account of the council in Ferrara/Florence. Murad II openly expressed his anxiety about the council to a Byzantine emissary sent to inform him of John VIII's trip to the assembly. As Doukas writes,

> Murad was apprehensive because the emperor had journeyed to Frankia (Latin Europe) and concluded a pact of concord with the Franks, and had also become a Frank. Murad feared that an agreement had been reached

[116] Saruca Pasha disappears from Oruç Bey's list of vezirs for some time, but continues to appear on those of Murad's Annals. It was also Oruç Bey who mentioned Saruca's second removal from court (p. 61). Given the circumstances, i.e. Saruca's collaboration and friendliness with the Serbs, his isolation in early 1438 makes sense. Interestingly, Murad's Annals mention Fazlullah again in 842 h. as vezir, but not Şehabeddin. In Oruç Bey (p. 61) the situation is the opposite. In the absence of other evidence, and given the political circumstances of that year and of 1439, the logical composition of the divan would be Halil Pasha as Grand Vezir, then Fazullah and Şehabeddin (or perhaps Saruca) as the third vezir, with Şehabeddin also serving on the divan in his capacity as Beylerbey of Rumelia. Again, however, other evidence is needed to resolve the matter. In any case, the ascendancy of the pro-conquest faction in the make-up of the divan is evident.

> whereby the western nations were to attack him by land and sea in order to expel him from the West.[117] When the ambassadors explained that the emperor had gone to Italy, not for the reasons being rumored but because of dogmatic differences in their faith, he was relieved by the report.[118]

Sphrantzes goes into even more detail concerning this embassy, noting not only the sultan's apprehension, but anxieties harbored by the Byzantines themselves. The union, it was feared, would be seen as an act of treachery on the part of the sultan's vassal, and thereby provoke an Ottoman attack.[119] The Mamelukes themselves saw the council not only as a meeting to settle differences within the church, but as a forum for planning war against the Muslims.[120]

Members of the divan intensely debated whether to invade Constantinople in light of the Byzantines' seeming intent to enact a military alliance with the West. Initially the war hawks prevailed and an expedition was prepared against the Byzantine capital.[121] Yet Halil Pasha's influence at the

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[117] The fact that the Ottomans were aware of the plans that were being put forth at the council is shown in the letter sent by Mehmet the Conqueror to the Sultan in Cairo following the victory at Varna. The letter makes mention of a council that lasted ten years (referring to the continuing councils in Basel-Ferrara-Florence-Rome) and that it was decided during the deliberations to make a two-pronged assault by land and sea.

[118] Doukas, p. 181. Sphrantzes confirms Doukas' account, and further indicates that Murad planned an attack on Constantinople in order to force the sultan to return. The account is once again confirmed by a report from the Venetians, relayed by the council of Basel's legate, regarding the departure of John VIII (Segovia, p. 1026): "Symon autem de Valle, qui Venecias iverat legatorum ex parte, dicebat tempore publicacionis harum litterarum sibi scriptum abinde galeam, que primo recesserat, visam fuisse in Corfu XV. Augusti media via a Constantinopoli, ex ipsoque portu exivisset cum ea Constantinus germanus imperatoris, ut in eius absencia Constanitnopoli pro eo remaneret, quodque per insignem ambasiatam imperatoris Turcus, qui arbitrabatur eum venturum pro subsidio, fuisset pacificatus notificato eidem quod super differenciis fidei, sed quod ante ambasiate exposicionem tradita fuerant ei magna munera, quia sic de more esset in ilis partibus, Turco similiter faciente cum suos mitteret ambasiatores."

[119] Sphrantzes, pp. 51–52. "Since Lord John was determined to attend the synod, it was decided to send Andronikos Iagros as ambassador to the sultan to inform him of this, as if he were a friend and a brother. The sultan replied as follows: "It does not seem a good idea to me, to labor so hard and to spend so much money. What will he win? I am here: if he is in need of aspers for his expenses or for any other funds for his maintenance, I am prepared to serve him." A long discussion and debate ensued over whether to follow the sultan's recommendation or to attend the synod. Our emperor's desire, or rather our evil fortune, prevailed in the end."

[120] المقريزى: السلوك لمعرفة دول الملوك ، تحقيق محمد عبد القادر عطا ، دار الكتب العلميه ، 1761: "فإنه يقال إن إجتماعه بالباباكان بسبب محاربته للمسلمين." بيروت 1997, ص.

[121] Sphrantzes, pp. 51–52: "While our emperor was preparing to leave and while he was away from the City, the sultan decided to attack and to send an army against the City. His intention, however, was not so much conquest as to recall our emperor."

Porte was still prevailing. He argued that an assault on the Byzantines would only drive the Emperor further into the arms of the West, and even if the union did come about, "we still have our treaties and friendly relations with them. In the future you will act as you see fit. If, on the other hand, there is no agreement in the synod, then the scheme has worked."[122] These arguments typify Halil's predilection for diplomacy over brute force and his fear that a direct assault on Byzantium would only provoke a greater reaction from the West. They proved convincing to Murad. The siege was called off.[123]

Ottoman Relations with Karaman

An important factor in the discussions over imperial policy concerning Byzantium and the West in 1437 was the recent military aggression of Ibrahim Bey near Ottoman-held territories in Anatolia.[124] To understand this event and its import, it is necessary to take a closer look at the Ottomans' relations with their Anatolian neighbors, and specifically with the Prince of Karaman.

The most important characteristic distinguishing Ottoman possessions in Rumelia and Anatolia is that the former bordered on infidel Christian territory and the latter on the territory of fellow Muslims. The Ottomans needed no pretext for their expansion into Europe. Waging war to expand

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[122] Ibid.

[123] The Castilian traveller and papal spy Pero Tafur offers some insight into these events (Tafur, p 147). "During my stay in the city the Grand Turk marched forth to a place on the Black Sea, and his road took him close to Constantinople. The Despot and those of Pera, thinking that the Turks were going to occupy the country, prepared and armed themselves. The Grand Turk passed close by the wall, and there was some skirmishing that day, and he passed with a great company of people... On this day a great present was carried from Constantinople and taken to the place where the Turks were stationed. I thought that they would sit down and besiege the city, but they continued their march to the Black Sea against a people which had rebelled." The events Tafur describes here took place several months before his departure from Constantinople, which was in November of 1437. The only campaign undertaken by Murad in the autumn of 1437 was the one against Ibrahim Bey. This suggests that Tafur may have witnessed Murad returning from suppressing Ibrahim Bey's rebellion, and not travelling to it. It was this already-assembled force which the war hawks wished to use against the Byzantine capital. Tafur's account (see note below) would seem to suggest that the assault was already underway and that a skirmish was fought before the Ottomans struck the siege and marched home. His mention of a generous gift offered to the Ottomans suggests that bribery played a role here as a well.

[124] A peace treaty between Murad and Ibrahim Bey had been signed in May/June of that year.

the "Abode of Islam" was not only approved, it was eagerly encouraged and seen as affirmation of divine will. This was not true for the Porte's southern neighbors. Islam forbade intra-Muslim warfare and it took a good deal of legal interpretation and circumvention to justify these wars.[125] In later chapters we can see this clearly demonstrated in the Ottoman conflict with Karaman.

The significant powers in the Anatolian peninsula can be divided into two categories: Turkish principalities and foreign empires. The Turkish principalities had been established in Anatolia since the time of the Seljuks. The most important of these in the fifteenth century were the Beylik or Princedom of Karaman, and the beylik of Karaman's principal local rival, the Dulkadirids. These beyliks, which had been established during the period of Seljuk decline, had been absorbed partly into the Ottoman empire in the 14th century under Bayezid. They regained their independence after the Battle of Ankara in 1402. After the Empire's recovery, however, they served as buffer states between the Mameluke and Ottoman Empires and later on became more like client states. To the north of these were two Oghuz Turk federations known as the Karakoyunlu, or "Black Sheep," and the Akkoyunlu, or "White Sheep." These regained their influence after the fall of Tamerlane's Empire in the early years of the 15th century.

Tamerlane's self-proclaimed successor in the east, Shah Rukh, had ambitious designs on this region. His goal of re-establishing the Timurid Empire was seen as the most important threat to the Ottomans in Anatolia. Throughout his reign Murad humbly acknowledged Shah Rukh's general suzerainty, even donning in 1435 the خلعة, or cloak symbolizing that Murad served as Shah Rukh's "viceroy" in governing his lands. This humble policy proved successful, and there was no major conflict between the two powers during Murad's long reign.[126]

The Ottomans worked hard to maintain peace with the other major imperial power in the region, the Mamelukes. The two were in many ways similar. The ruling military elite governing the Mameluke state was of Turkic origin, and shared a number of linguistic and cultural traditions with the Ottomans. The Mamelukes, as their name implies,[127] were origi-

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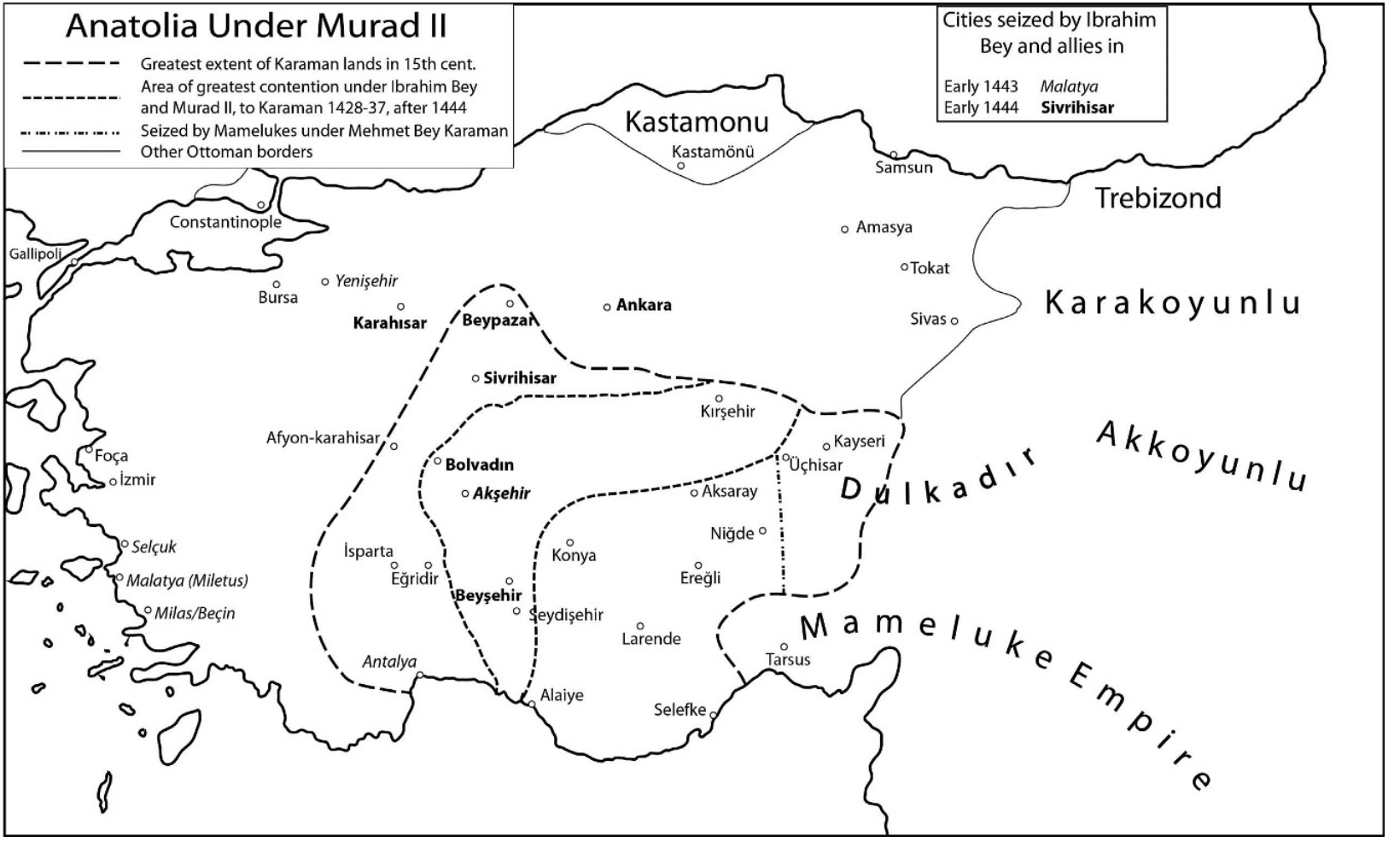
[125] For an excellent discussion of sharia, jihad and intra-Muslim warfare in the fifteenth century see Har El-Shai, *Struggle for domination in the Middle East: the Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485–91* (Leiden, New York and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 10–13.

[126] See İnalcik, "Murad II," p. 606.

[127] The word mameluke (in Arabic مملوك) simply means that which is owned, or possessed. We translate it as slave, but the word is devoid of much of the derogatory connotation of the English word "slave," which in Arabic is rendered 'abd (عبد) or raqiq (رقيق).



Map 2. Anatolia during the reign of Murad II.

nally slaves recruited into the sultan's private guard and army. In other words, they were the Egyptian version of the Slaves of the Porte. When they succeeded in taking over the Egyptian government at the end of the thirteenth century the head of this slave institution became the *de facto* head of government. The caliph, who was considered by Sunni Muslims to be the legitimate successor to Mohammed and the head of the Islamic community, was relegated to the position of a nominal figurehead. Political authority was in the hands of the Mameluke Sultan.

As to be expected, what friction there was between the Mamelukes and Ottomans concerned the buffer states — Dulkadir and Karaman. Both the Ottomans and Mamelukes attempted to bring these princedoms under their influence, and the Mamelukes in particular sought to maintain them as buffer states against Ottoman aggression. The princes of these regions resisted not only these two major empires, but also each other's hostility, warming up to one side or the other as the need arose. In this way, Ibrahim Bey of Karaman, who ruled the beylik from 1422–1464, was in many respects an Anatolian version of George Branković or Vlad Dracul. He sought to navigate a course between two great regional powers, hoping that events would usher in a political breakthrough. One such event was the collapse of Bayezid's empire in 1402 after his defeat at Ankara. Bayezid had seized the principality of Karaman in 1398, killing Alaeddin, Ibrahim's grandfather, sending Ibrahim's father and uncle, Mehmet and Ali, to Bursa. After his victory over Bayezid, Tamerlane not only restored Mehmet to this principality, he granted him lands to the north that had not belonged to his father: Beypazar, Sivrihisar, Kirşehir, Kayseri and parts of Hamit-ili, which lay nearby to the west. Tamerlane's generosity was intended to weaken the Ottomans by creating strong rivals in the peninsula. The lands mentioned above would be the main source of contention and conflict between the Karaman and Ottoman dynasties in the decades to come. For his part, Mehmet of Karaman gladly acknowledged Tamerlane's distant patronage and suzerainty as a small price to pay for his restored and even expanded principality.

During the Ottoman Time of Troubles the Karamanids, just like their neighbors, scrambled to grab what land they could while the Ottoman heirs were busy bloodying one another in civil war. Yet when the Ottomans succeeded in gaining some of their lands back in alliance with another Turkish dynasty, Germiyan, Mehmet Bey sought protection under the Mamelukes. The Mamelukes did not hesitate to grab territory for themselves and seized the city of Tarsus from the Karamanids, and Mehmet Bey

was forced to ally with another Anatolian dynasty to retake it. This border region, occupied by the Varsak and Turgut Turcoman tribesman, was of key importance to the Karamanids in the fifteenth century and served as a mountainous refuge for the prince in time of troubles. Both tribes could be counted on to support the Karamanids against foreign aggression.

The Mamelukes had their own local allies, having signed an alliance with the Dulkadirids, to whom they proferred the city of Kayseri after seizing it from Karaman. Mehmet of Karaman attempted to retake it after the Mamelukes departed, but the failed attempt resulted in his son's death and Mehmet's imprisonment in Cairo. He was released from there a year later, and returned to his principality via the crusader Kingdom of Cyprus.

The Prince of Karaman, having been imprisoned now on two different occasions by the Ottomans and the Mamelukes, decided to bide his time until the newly-established Ottoman ruler Mehmet Chelebi's death. Taking advantage of the dynastic upheaval which followed he supported the claims of both Mustafas against Murad II. Mehmet of Karaman died soon afterward, shot by a cannon in an attempt to take the city of Antalya in 1423. Just as the Ottomans, his succession also resulted in civil war among his sons and brothers. Ibrahim Bey emerged victorious in 1424, but only with the assistance of Murad II himself. The latter no doubt saw an opportunity to place an Ottoman client on the throne of Karaman, as well as obtain the return of some of the Ottoman lands lost to Karaman in 1402 (see above). This policy worked briefly,[128] but soon Ibrahim became as vigorous a practitioner of opportunistic expansion as his father Mehmet.[129]

Like his father, Ibrahim Bey realized two important truths about the Ottomans. First, they were too powerful to contend with one-on-one given the vast extent of their lands and resources. Second, their relative strength meant they would continue to expand in Anatolia at the expense of the other Turkish principalities. The only way to achieve relative parity was for Karaman to extend his own lands. This could be done by either seizing Ottoman territory or that of other neighboring Turkish principalities. Regardless of direction, such expansion could only occur when the Ottomans themselves were distracted by conflicts. Thus Ibrahim ascribed heartily to the dictum, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

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[128] Despite overtures made to the Prince of Karaman, Ibrahim Bey refused to support Cuneyd in his march against the Porte during the first years of Murad's reign.

[129] See I. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "İbrahim Beyin Karaman İmareti Vakfiyesi," *Belleten I* (1937): 111–127, pp. 114–115.

The enemies of the Ottomans included, of course, the Christian states of the Balkans. From 1423–1430 the Ottomans were fighting the Venetians, having laid siege to the city of Thessaloniki. In 1428, in addition to this war with the Venetians, the Ottomans were also fighting off a Hungarian assault on their newly acquired fortress of Golubac. According to Aşıkpaşazâde,[130] Ibrahim Bey was in contact not only with the Venetians but with Sigismund and George Branković, and he proposed that they cooperate and initiate a two-front war. [131] A proposal put forth by the Venetians was the mirror image of the crusader fleet's plan in 1444: the Venetians would block the straits with 8 or 10 vessels, thereby trapping the Ottomans in Rumelia and allowing Ibrahim Bey to seize Anatolia.[132] Whether acting in conjunction with the Venetians or not, Ibrahim Bey moved to take the lands he had earlier yielded to the Ottomans in exchange for putting him on the throne—Beyşehir and the Hamit-ili. Though the Ottomans succeeded in driving Sigismund from Golubac, they were forced to accept Ibrahim Bey's acquisitions in Anatolia.

The next great conflict between the Ottomans and the rival Karamans would take place from 1436–1437.[133] As mentioned above, the Mamelukes had earlier seized Kayseri from Karaman and given it to Dulkadir at a time when Mehmet was at odds with the caliphate. By 1436, however, the Karamanid-Mameluke relations were quite friendly, and discord between

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[130] Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 128. Aşıkpaşazâde's accusations, though perhaps true, should nevertheless be viewed with some suspicion. The Ottomans were eager to believe that Karaman had worked in conjunction with the Christians since this gave them a justification to attack and seize Ibrahim Bey's lands.

[131] Aşıkpaşazâde, pp. 127–128. Aşıkpaşazâde, whose chronology for this period is generally questionable, places this event in 837 h., or 1433/34 AD. Uzunçarşılı repeats this error in both his "Ibrahim Beyin" and *Osmanli Tarihi*. Based on western sources there is no question that the siege of Golubac took place in 1428, not 1433, a fact which İnalcik also acknowledges (Gazavât, pp. 82–83).

[132] İnalcik describes these relations at length in his footnote in the Gazavât (p. 82). He cites as evidence F. Thiriet, ed., *Régestes des Déliberations du Sénat de Venise Concernant La Romanie*, vol. II, 1400–1430 (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1959), nrs. 2158 and 2160, p. 266. These two documents outline the naval plan mentioned above and suggest communication between Ibrahim Bey and the Venetians, but do not prove it. Although there were Venetian plans to send an embassy, it is not certain whether it actually arrived in Karaman, and if so, it is not certain what the results of the negotiations were.

[133] The sources for these events are Ibn al-Hajr, entries for the years 839 and 840 h.; Takvimler, pp. 27 and 41; Aşıkpaşazâde, pp. 128–129; Neşri, pp. 617–619; Oruç Bey, p. 60; Sadeddin, pp. 186–189. For a summary description of these events see Har-El, *Struggle for Domination*, pp. 72–73, though the author's chronology differs slightly from my own, which is based off of the dates given in Ibn al-Hajr and the ordinal chronology in the Takvimler. See also İnalcik's article "Murad II," p. 606

the Ottomans and the Mamelukes was growing. Given the new situation, and tacit Mameluke approval, Ibrahim Bey moved to take Kayseri and the surrounding territory back.

The Dulkadirids were left with no choice but to seek Ottoman assistance. In December of 1436 Prince Süleyman of Dulkadir sent his son to the Ottoman court to beg for help against Karaman. The Ottomans seemed ready to oblige, particularly since Ibrahim's forces were poised to threaten the Ottoman city of Sivas and even Amasya, where the Beylerbey of Anatolia was currently residing. Yet the Ottomans were distracted by a potential conflict with their most feared rival, the heir to the Timurid Empire, Shah Rukh. Once they were sure this crisis had passed Murad moved swiftly to deal with his upstart southern neighbor.

The sultan personally led his armies from Anatolia and Rumelia, first taking back Kayseri. Another army, led by Ibrahim Bey's brother İsa, whom Murad had been grooming for the Karamanid throne, marched against Karaman proper seizing Akşehir, ravaging the areas around Konya and Larende, and eventually taking Beyşehir as well. Tension was growing with the Mamelukes, however, who were irritated with Ottoman support for Dulkadir and attacks against their protégé, Ibrahim Bey of Karaman. Murad's decision to send forces into Taş-ili to pursue and capture Ibrahim Bey, who had fled there seeking refuge, no doubt added to the tension since this amounted to a violation of Mameluke sovereignty. The Mameluke Sultan himself resolved in mid-March of 1437 to take the field, though cooler heads prevailed and it was decided to send military assistance under command of the Deputy of Syria instead.

This tense situation nearly resulted in war between two of the great powers of the Muslim world, but it was defused by the relatively mild peace terms the Ottomans offered in May of 1437, despite their clear military victory. A portion of Hamit-ili was handed over to Karaman's brother, İsa, who had been under Murad's protection since the 1420s, though he died soon after in the same year. The Ottomans held on to Akşehir and Beyşehir, the cities which they had lost to Karaman in 1428. Most importantly, Ibrahim Bey swore to Murad's personal envoy, Mevlana Şukrullah, that he would remain in the future unswervingly loyal to the Ottomans.[134] The Mamelukes, satisfied with the terms, marched home.

By mid-1437 any potential conflicts in Anatolia were for the time being averted. The main source of trouble for the Ottomans, Ibrahim Bey, had

[134] Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 129.

been taught a severe lesson and had sworn his loyalty to Murad. Relations with the Mamelukes and their other neighbors were peaceful if not cordial. This enabled the Ottomans to turn their attention to their main area of expansion—the Balkans. We have already mentioned that a siege on the Byzantine capital was contemplated in this period, evidence of the change in mood and tension within the *divan*. Before the year's end, however, another event would encourage a campaign of conquest to the north—the death of Sigismund. The Ottomans rightly assumed, perhaps based on their own bitter experience, that the emperor's passing would result in political turmoil and conflict. Sigismund's own actions in the last years of his reign no doubt influenced Ottoman opinion, specifically the Hungarian raid into Ottoman territory and the destruction of the marcher lords' river fleet in Kruševac in 1437. Though relatively small in scale, the Kruševac raid, which resulted in the defeat of the marcher lord Ali Bey and the seizure of several Ottoman banners, was nevertheless the first successful offensive of recent memory. It was perhaps a sign of renewed confidence for Sigismund, who felt that he could finally begin to bring the united forces of his various kingdoms to bear on the Turkish threat. His death dispelled any such plans, and left the country weaker and more exposed than it had been in decades.

The political changes in the divan, the death of Sigismund, and the settlement of other potential conflicts created an ideal context for the Ottoman invasions into Serbia and Hungary. The Ottoman onslaught would continue unabated from the winter of 1437/1438 until first faltering before Belgrade in 1440, and ending in disastrous defeat at the hands of Hunyadi in 1442. From 1437 to 1440, however, the initiative belonged entirely to the Ottomans. The Hungarians would pay dearly during these years for their incompetency and inability to confront the Turks. The reasons for this incompetency and the political and military fallout are described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THREE KINGS OF HUNGARY—SIGISMUND, ALBERT AND WLADISLAS

Familiaritas—The Lord and His Retinue

The most important concept governing political relationships in fifteenth century Hungary was that of the *familia.*[1] A nobleman's (including the king's) *familia* was comprised of his retinue and officials, both noble and non-noble, who were bound by specific contracts of service to their lord. These were known as *familiares,* and though they could not be taxed, they were expected to serve militarily when called upon in their lord's contingent. They also performed official and managerial services, such as tax collector, judge, or special envoy, and they counseled their lord in important matters. In exchange for this they received monetary payment and/or other forms of compensation, such as estates. The lord was legally responsible for his *familiaris*, and had to answer for any crimes he might commit including restitution to the victim. Furthermore, if the lord were promoted in status the more significant members of his *familia* were promoted along with him. It is important to note that *familiaritas*, as the institution was known in Latin, was not simply a version of vassalage. Though in the contract with his lord a *familiaris* might be expected to manage an estate this was not a fief in the feudal sense but simply the execution of an office or service. The *familiaris* was viewed by his lord as a servant, and rose or fell based on the skill and loyalty he showed in performing his services. The terms of *familiaritas* were governed by contract. If the agreement were violated by either party, the contract was subject to forfeit and the obligations were no longer binding. The position was not inheritable, and when either party died, the successor was obliged to establish new contracts and agreements should he wish.

The *familia*, and its emphasis on loyalty and service as a means of advancement, allowed Sigismund, Albert and Wladislas to elevate noble-

[1] See Held, *Hunyadi*, pp. 18–20 as well as Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526*, trans. Tamás Pálosfalvi, English edition ed. Andrew Ayton (2001; reprint, London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2005), pp. 126–128.

men of modest means but great promise to positions of high authority.[2] Among these was John Hunyadi, who became the most important nobleman in the Kingdom of Hungary from 1440 up until his death in 1456. His family origins are obscure, and it is suggested that his father, Voyk, married into nobility after taking refuge in Hungary in the 1390s, thereafter seeking patronage from the royal court and eventually receiving it from Sigismund. For such men "unflagging loyalty to the sovereign, an ability to procure mercenaries for the king's *banderium* and, above all, willingness to lend the king money were the requirements for advancement." [3] Voyk indeed advanced and by 1414 was able to use "*de Hunyad*" as a noble designator. Both his sons became members of Sigismund's household, or *familiares*. From there, based on his service to Sigismund, Albert, and eventually Wladislas, John Hunyadi achieved various offices and obtained immense landholdings. Again, favor was earned through devout service, above all military service. It was Hunyadi's contribution to the victory over Wladislas' rivals at Battaszek in January 1441 that induced Wladislas to grant him and his benefactor Ujlaki the highly prestigious Voivodeship of Transylvania. Soon after, Hunyadi became the most powerful baron of the kingdom. His son, Matthias, would go on to rule as king over Hungary during its most glorious era.

The king was able to promote men such as Hunyadi through the exercise of his royal prerogatives, an essential tool in developing the relationship of lord and *familiaris*. In his prerogatives the king was traditionally bound only by the conditions of his coronation oath. These oaths, [4] which did not differ greatly from Sigismund to Wladislas, existed by virtue of the fact that a given king was seen as valid only after certain conditions had been met. One of these conditions was the sanction of the nobility who had elected the king in the first place.[5] So long as the king abided by his oath, he could in theory exercise his royal prerogatives at will. Should he violate his oath,

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[2] This concept is expressed openly and quite clearly in the preamble to a document from Albert granting lands to his faithful servant Simon Rozgony (Fejer, pp. 281–288, nr. 148).

[3] Held, *Hunyadi*, p. 8.

[4] Janos Bak, *Königtum und Stände in Ungarn im 14.-16. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag Gmbh, 1973), pp. 39–41.

[5] The throne of Hungary was not an electoral throne in the same sense as that of the Holy Roman Emperor. Sigismund and Albert's claims were based on dynastic ties as well. Wladislas represents an exception in this regard, insofar as his election had no real basis in dynastic ties. See Bak, *Königtum*, p. 41.

then the nobility was juridically absolved from their loyalty to the sovereign.

These oaths constituted attempts to limit the power of the elected sovereign by limiting the scope of his patronage. Yet the king still had a number of avenues to bind important men to him. As patron of the church, he had far greater authority in granting ecclesiastical offices than other neighboring nations, similar in practice to French Gallicanism. He also controlled the offices of the state, bestowing and revoking them as he pleased. Another important prerogative was the ability to promote subjects to the nobility and to grant his subjects land. The king was, in short, the highest executive, legislative and judicial authority in the land, and he determined the foreign policy of the kingdom to include decisions of war and peace.

Among the posts the monarch was entitled to fill was that of palatine.[6] This position was held during the reign of Wladislas by Lawrence Hedervary, who played a key role both in bringing Wladislas to the throne and in keeping him there. His duties included managing the kingdom and presiding over the council during the monarch's absence, though all decisions had to be later approved by the king. His salary of 10,400 florins were used to maintain his extensive landholdings, which were not fixed but fluctuated with changes in the office. His earnings from these lands enabled him to raise a large private army, which he brought to fight for the king in the event of war.[7] Similar to the palatine in prestige was the *iudex curiae regiae*, or royal judge. Though appointed by the king and considered a member of his retinue, he represented to some extent an independent judiciary, able to pronounce judgments unfavorable to but legally binding on the king.

More or less equal in status to the palatine and the royal judge were the Voivode of Transylvania[8] and the three bans. These four territorial offices were key to the defense of the realm and they represented the front-line defense against the Turks. The bans and the voivode also played a significant role in maintaining the loyalty of the buffer states—Wallachia, Serbia and Bosnia. Because of these burdens they were granted a good deal of administrative leeway and income. The voivode's salary was 12,000 florins (that of the three bans was a little less) and was received both in monetary

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[6] There was an attempt during Albert's reign to make this position contingent on the approval of the council. See Bak, *Königtum*, p. 40.

[7] See also Engel, *The Realm*, pp. 152–153.

[8] Ibid.

payment and from the salt mines under his management. This made his office one of the most lucrative in the kingdom, a fact of great significance for John Hunyadi who held this title from 1440 onwards, and who used this money to fund his army. The voivode held judicial rights over the seven counties of Transylvania, and was able to fill the county seats with his own *familiares*. He also exercised judicial authority in the voivodeship, though he was barred from interfering in church affairs.

The three banates, or frontier marches, were Croatia/Slavonia, Severin and Macva (Macso in Hungarian). The first and most prestigious, that of Croatia/Slavonia, was held during the 1440s by Matthew Thalloci and his brothers, a natural choice given their Italian merchant origins. Their position brought them into contact with the Ottomans, particularly over the Kingdom of Bosnia. Severin was the next most prestigious banate on account of its key significance for the defense of the realm. Its southern boundary constituted the only shared border between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire since the defeat of Nicopolis in 1396. It was therefore integral to the defense of the country. Between 1410 and 1426 Pipo Scolari constructed a series of new castles and shored up older ones[9] in this banate to create a defensive chain of 17 fortresses stretching from Belgrade to Turnu Severin. The costs of maintaining these were significant, a fact which led to their abandonment by the Teutonic knights in 1435. They were then taken over by the Thalloci. In September of 1439, however, King Albert awarded the banate of Severin to John Hunyadi and his brother.[10] It was the first baronial position for the future regent. Realizing the opportunity, Hunyadi voluntarily covered part of the costs of the maintenance of the fortifications from his own funds.

The Banate of Macva, which had largely been lost to the Turks by 1411, was the least significant of the three. In 1441 Wladislas removed the relative and supporter of Elizabeth, Ladislas Garai, from this office and granted it to Imre Hedervary, the kinsmen of his staunch supporter Lawrence Hedervary. This demonstrates an important attribute of the voivodeship and banates: they were awarded and confiscated at the will of the king. Another curious feature of these offices is that they could be held in title by more than one person at a time, and indeed this was the rule throughout

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[9] See Erik Fugedi, "Hungarian Castles in Existence at the Start of the Ottoman Advance," in *From Hunyadi to Rakoczi, War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*, East Central European Society and War, nr. 13, vol. IV, ed. Bela K. Kiraly and Janos M. Bak (New York: Atlantic Studies, 1982), pp. 59–63.

[10] See Held, *Hunyadi*, pp. 13–14.

Wladislas' reign. Nicholas Ujlaki held the title of Ban of Macva at the same time as Hedervary, and was Voivode of Transylvania along with Hunyadi. At any given time several of the Thalloci brothers occupied one office simultaneously.

Other important offices in the kingdom were those of the king's household, i.e. the steward, the treasurer, the master of stables (aka marshal) and the royal cupbearer. These positions were of both a courtly and military nature, and these men served as officers in wartime. Another important office was that of chancellor. He not only oversaw the issuing of documents but also served as keeper of the royal seals. This office was given by Wladislas to his most stalwart supporter, Simon Rozgony, in 1440. A large group of court officials, the *milites aulae*, or "soldiers of the court," were more than their title implies. They were important noblemen with their own retinues who performed official functions for the king as well as served under his *banderium* during time of war.

Yet another office at the disposition of the king was that of count. The counties were the primary administrative unit of the kingdom, not unlike the sanjaks of the Ottoman Empire, and the count who administered them, usually a member of the baronial class, did so at the behest of the king. In exchange he received a third of the income from the county, and was subject to the jurisdiction of the royal court, not that of the local lord. In truth, the count's presence was usually required at court, and the tasks of administration were given to someone from the count's *familia* with the title of vicomte. The other officials in the county were usually local inhabitants from the lesser nobility, who by the mid-fifteenth century had allied themselves politically with the monarch in support of central authority as a means to check the ambitions of the magnates.[11]

The baronial class which held most of the offices described above was not officially designated as a distinct class. As in Poland, all Hungarian nobleman enjoyed in theory the same rights and privileges.[12] Yet in practice the concentration of wealth and power into the hands of a few noble families[13] led to a baronial class with an agenda and priorities somewhat different from that of the lesser nobility. The status of these magnates was reflected in the extent of their lands and the number and strength of their

[11] See Bak, *Königtum*, pp. 40–41.

[12] The most important were "personal freedom, freedom from certain levies and taxes, the right to possess landed estates, and to dispose of their properties as they chose." Held, *Hunyadi*, p. 31.

[13] Held gives the number of baronial families as about 50 or 60, which produced about 350–400 males eligible for offices (Held, *Hunyadi*, p. 35).

familia, which was bound to the lord in the same way as the king's retinue was bound to him, receiving payment and estates in exchange for exercising official duties and providing men and equipment in time of war. The wealthier barons tried insofar as they were able to mimic the royal court, creating their own private armies, chancelleries and courts centered administratively at the lord's castle.

Matthew Thalloci exemplifies this type of baron, i.e. one who rose from relative obscurity to become one of the most powerful magnates in the kingdom, based on his service to the king (he served Sigismund, Albert and Wladislas with equal competence). His patrician family originated in the Adriatic island of Cursola (Korcula), from where Matthew moved to Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in 1413. Here he made his living as a merchant for some years, and seems to have been quite successful. Thalloci's talent for logistics, organization and defense, which were required of Ragusan merchants given the security concerns involved in leading long caravans laden with profitable goods through the Balkans, would be put to use later on as he proved himself one of the great Hungarian commanders of the 15th century. In 1419 Matthew had his residence in Belgrade, where he was a consul in 1425 and a judge in 1426. It was his position in Belgrade which no doubt brought him into Sigismund's orbit. Matthew next made an appearance at the siege of Golubac in 1428, where he had brought his own banderia as well as significant artillery which he put to good use against the Turks.[14] Emperor Sigismund was duly impressed, and even more so when Matthew and his youngest brother John accompanied Sigismund to Italy from 1431 to 1433, with the largest armed escort of any nobleman. He was well rewarded by Sigismund for his services, and given lands and offices through which he might raise the necessary funds to fight the king's wars. In 1435, after restoring the Bosnian ruler Tvrtko II to his throne, Matthew became ban of Croatia, Dalmatia and Slavonia. After Albert's death Matthew was a member of the delegation sent to Krakow to secure Wladislas' candidacy. Because of this he was imprisoned on his return by Elizabeth, though he later escaped.[15]

Quite frequently if one member of the immediate family were accepted into the *familia* of a nobleman or a king so were the others. Matthew's

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[14] Lajos Thálloczy, *Codex Diplomaticus Partium Regno Hungariae Adnexarum*, Monumenta Hungariae Historica, vol. 33 (Budapest, 1907), pp. 111–123.

[15] Helen Kottanerin, *Helen Kottanerin: Denkwürdigkeiten*, Wien 1445–1452, ed. Karl Mollay (Vienna, 1971), pp. 22–24. Evidently he escaped with the help of his barber (Długosz, pp. 231–232).

youngest brother, John, became the prior of Vrana, the headquarters of the military Order of the Knights of St. John in Hungary. John also conducted the heroic defense of Belgrade in 1440 just after Wladislas' accession to the throne. Their brother Franko had also served as captain of Belgrade and Ban of Severin, and he was one of the leaders during the raid on Kruševac in 1437. Under the reign of Wladislas he commanded the Thalloci's banderium at the battle of Varna.[16]

The magnates of Hungary also held a monopoly on the most important ecclesiastical posts in the kingdom,[17] which did not in practice differ much from the other baronial posts. As Pal Engel wrote regarding Hungarian prelates in the fifteenth century:

> The bishops were above all barons, then statesmen and men of war. Religious duties came last among their priorities. Some of them had not even been ordained, and those who had taken holy orders normally had their pastoral activities performed by substitutes... Moreover, they were obliged to recruit troops in proportion to their estates and were expected to lead them in person in the event of war.[18]

After 1403[19] the prelates were appointed by the king and therefore came under his patronage. Just as the barons the prelates had in turn their own retinues, which consisted of *praediales* on account of their *praedium*, or the land granted them in exchange for and through the duration of their service.[20] This service was mostly military, and was set up as a contract similar to that of the *familiares*.[21]

As mentioned above, the king had more power in appointing prelates than most other European monarchs, and he filled these positions with members of his *familia*. Yet there was still some degree of separation of church and state. As in other European countries, the ecclesiastical courts were separate from the royal secular courts. And just as today, the admin-

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[16] Długosz, p. 319.

[17] At the beginning of the fifteenth century there were two archbishops (Esztergom and Kalocsa), twelve bishops, and twenty two priors who were considered prelates.

[18] Engel, *The Realm*, p. 334.

[19] Due to rebellious activities among the prelates of the church Sigismund took measures in 1403 to obtain the right of appointment for himself, the king. In the chaos of the Great Western Schism he was able to achieve this and the situation remained thus throughout the fifteenth century. In this way, he was able to appoint prelates in much the same way as other offices in the realm.

[20] See Held, *Hunyadi*, p. 44.

[21] There were some differences between praediales and familiares. For example, the former could not use the designator "de" in their family name, nor could they possess a coat of arms. See Held, *Hunyadi*, p. 45.

istrative divisions of the church did not coincide with the secular. The most important of these administrative posts was that of Archbishop of Esztergom. He was the primate of the Hungarian Church and presided over the coronation of the Hungarian king. This archbishopric was held during the reign of Wladislas by Dionysius Szecsi. He was as strong a supporter of Elizabeth as he was an opponent of Wladislas, and he used his position as nominal leader of the Hungarian church to combat the Jagiellonian party. In 1441, Szecsi ordered the churchmen under his jurisdiction in Transylvania to not pay the traditional *subsidium caritativum* to the Bishop of Oradea, who had been Wladislas' appointee.[22] This payment was usually given when a bishop assumed a new office, and Wladislas demanded it be rendered according to custom. Szecsi, conscious that the funds would be used by the bishop to raise an army against Elizabeth, stubbornly pointed out that the funds could be requested, but not demanded, at the same time encouraging his adherents to deny any such request.

This newly appointed bishop in question was John de Dominis.[23] His career exemplifies the way in which the king, in this case Wladislas, used his royal prerogatives to elevate persons who had shown loyalty and service. John, a Dalmatian by descent, was in the 1430s Bishop of Ancona and then Senj in Croatia. While holding this office he served as papal nuncio to Hungary, and was ordered by Eugene to select other members from his order and begin preaching the crusade in early 1438 to both the king of Hungary and the nobility.[24] Soon afterward, the pope used him as his legate in negotiations for a peace agreement between Albert and Wladislas, again in the hope of freeing up Albert's armies to undertake the crusade.[25] John was involved in these frustrating negotiations for nearly six months, and came into frequent contact with both Wladislas and Albert. As part of the negotiations, John would remain present at Albert's court in Vienna at least throughout the summer of 1439.

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[22] See Gustav Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (1438–1457), vol. 5 (Cologne, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1975), pp. 91–93, documents 2428 and 2429.

[23] He was mentioned briefly in chapter one.

[24] Fejer, pp. 162–163. It may be that John had also undertaken this responsibility during the reign of Sigismund. The preamble to the above-mentioned letter mentions Sigismund's willingness to undertake the crusade, etc. There is also a payment from the curia to de Dominis in March of 1437 for his service as an envoy to Hungary (Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 2, p. 4)

[25] Długosz makes mention of de Dominis as papal legate during the negotiations in Breslau in early 1439 (see note in chapter one).

John de Dominis next appears as one of the central figures in the delegation sent to Krakow to secure Wladislas' candidacy. He delivered the speech on behalf of the Hungarian delegation during the king's acceptance ceremony in Krakow cathedral[26], and stayed on at court to facilitate and expedite Wladislas' journey to Hungary. Due to his role in securing Wladislas' candidacy, John de Dominis fell out of favor with the rival candidate to the throne, Elizabeth. Pope Eugene IV, favoring Elizabeth's candidacy in the early stages of the civil war, agreed to her demands, as well as those of her relative Dionysius Szecsi, that John de Dominis be deprived of the bishopric of Veszprem.[27] This was despite the fact that John was still considered the pope's legate.

John continued to serve Wladislas and assisted Simon Rozgony and others of Wladislas' party in seizing Buda in May of 1440, one of the more significant events of the war. He then attended Wladislas' coronation there. For all these services rendered Wladislas bestowed upon John the bishopric of Oradea (Varad, Grosswardein) in June 1440, a move which infuriated Szecsi as mentioned above. John was rarely present in his new bishopric, remaining instead a close advisor to Wladislas at court and participating in the royal council. This is shown by his recurring signature on documents and decrees issued by the king through the next four years. John would continue to contribute militarily to the king's campaigns against Elizabeth, against whom he no doubt harbored a personal grudge.[28] He also contributed to Wladislas' campaigns against the Turks. His troops, which he personally commanded, comprised the largest noble contingent at Varna numbering roughly four and a half thousand, i.e. more than two banderia or roughly one fifth of the force.[29] For this, he was given the privilege of bearing the Holy Banner of Saint Ladislas.[30] Unfortunately, the valor of the bishop's men was not equal to their number. As Długosz writes: "The Bishop of Oradea was seen as among the first to flee, and while being pursued during the initial stages of the battle he fled to a lake, in which he is said

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[26] Długosz, pp. 214–216.

[27] He was replaced by Matthew Galatocs, who remained bishop throughout Wladislas' tenure as king. It is not certain when and by whom de Dominis was appointed to the bishopric. He held the title of "*episcopus nominatus*" up until his death. Perhaps he was granted the see by Albert, or maybe he secured it from Wladislas during his sojourn in Krakow.

[28] John and his forces were present, for example, at the siege of Esztergom in January 1441. Dąbrowski, p. 56.

[29] Beheim, p. 338.

[30] Długosz, p. 319.

to have drowned."[31] Despite this final and fatal act of infamy John de Dominis is a clear example of someone who rose in status at the court of the new king on the basis of his service and loyalty.

Another churchman in Wladislas' retinue was Simon Rozgony. Though a member of the Rozgony family had been Palatine of Hungary in the 1200s, no member of their family had held a high office for the next century. Simon Rozgony's father, also named Simon, joined the insurrection against Sigismund in 1403, but then accepted the amnesty and fell among the king's most loyal adherents. Simon the Elder took part in expeditions against the Hussites, Turks, Austrians and Bosnians. He was also one of the first inductees into the Order of the Dragon. As Malyusz writes: "The king was able to count on them [the Rozgonys] at all times, with no expectation of reward, only the hope of praise and recognition."[32] For this Sigismund granted offices and titles to Simon's sons and relatives.

Simon the Younger, who had decided on a clerical career, was bishop of Veszprem from 1428–1439. He then became bishop of Eger, and from 1440 on seems to have been the main proponent of Wladislas' reign in Hungary. As a Polish courtier writing from Buda in the summer of 1440 noted: "The Bishop of Eger [Simon Rozgony] is a man most accomplished in fame and labors, and he promotes the case of our king more than all the other Hungarians... You would wonder that such a powerful nature should be encased in such a small vessel, and you wouldn't believe someone who told you that the talents of war and the episcopal cloth might be so intermingled in a man."[33] Part of Rozgony's interest in the candidacy and reign of Wladislas was that it provided an opportunity to settle the question of the Zips, or a group of cities which had been provided to Poland as collateral on a loan to Sigismund and which Sigismund never repaid. Rozgony hoped that a union with Poland would allow him and his family to extend control over these wealthy cities as well. Indeed the staunchest and most enduring opposition to Wladislas' candidacy came from these cities and others in Slovakia, which were concerned with the power of the Rozgonys and what that might mean for their municipal freedom.

It was Rozgony who paved the way for Wladislas' arrival in the kingdom, and who most ardently encouraged the king to undertake the journey.[34] It was also Rozgony who led the push to seize Buda prior to Elizabeth, an

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[31] Ibid., p. 328.
[32] Mályusz, *Kaiser Sigismund*, p. 83.
[33] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, nr. 275
[34] Długosz, pp. 225–227.

undertaking that was essential for Wladislas to secure the throne.[35] The bishop was present at, and no doubt one of the main organizers of Wladislas' coronation a short while later. For these services, in front of the assembled barons of the kingdom, Wladislas awarded Rozgony the office of Royal Chancellor.[36] This was a significant post, particularly in a time of civil war, for the confiscation and restoration of lands was reflected in the documents which Rozgony now controlled. Simon continued to serve Wladislas and his interests. Along with his brother Stephen, they were the main opponents of the Habsburgs and their agent John Giskra in the north throughout Wladislas' four-year reign. Like de Dominis, Rozgony contributed generously to the Varna campaign, and also like the Bishop of Oradea he performed quite poorly at the battle itself, where he lost his life.

One of the most significant prerogatives of the more influential barons, prelates and other office-holders of the kingdom was their capacity to advise the king. The official venue for rendering this service was the royal council. It was expected, if not required, that the king would call a council and consult it before making decisions of major import. Furthermore, it was the council that governed during a monarch's long absence or an interregnum, as occurred in 1439/1440. It also gave its sanction to the bestowal of higher offices. The royal council consisted of the prelates and high dignitaries as well as the various counts and/or their representatives. Though the former were expected to attend, there was no formal list of persons who made up the council. Other members of the king's *familia,* the queen, lesser nobles and even important merchants might participate. The council was not simply a check on royal authority, for it gave the king the opportunity to convince otherwise difficult barons and to keep them at court where they were constantly aware of royal authority and might be better observed. It also gave greater legitimacy to the monarch's decisions.

In summary, power in Hungary in the mid-fifteenth century was governed less by formalized institutions and more by relatively formalized personal relationships, the most important being the relationship of the lord to his retinue, or *familia*. This relationship was based on loyalty and

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[35] See the aforementioned letter in *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, pp. 417–418.

[36] Długosz, p. 243. Other noblemen loyal to Wladislas were rewarded as well, but Rozgony was singled out: "Wladislas Hungarie et Polonie rex … in Alba Regali continuat; ubi instantibus baronibus et multitudine nobilium Hungarie Simonem Agriensem episcopum in cancellarium Regni Hungarie creat, et omnes literas, iura et privilegia predecessorum suorum regum Hungarie litteris suis cum maiestatis sigillo confirmat, bene meritos barones honoribus atolit et donacionibus."

services rendered in exchange for the receipt of benefices. It was important to pick wisely which lord's retinue one might join, though sometimes familial relationships and other constraints might narrow the options. A *familiaris* had a strong vested interest in his lord's success. His own rise or fall depended on it. Furthermore, it was through the exercise of capable patronage that a lord obtained the most qualified and desired *familiares*. In this environment success, especially the military sort, bred even greater success. Failures, particularly successive ones, were difficult to reverse. This dynamic is essential to understanding both the reign of Wladislas and the rise of Hunyadi, both of whom used military accomplishments as the primary means of building their retinues, their prestige and their power within the kingdom.

Sigismund of Luxembourg

The first half of the fifteenth century is overshadowed by the politics and personality of Sigismund of Luxembourg.[37] He led the Crusade of Nicopolis in 1396 to drive the Turks from the Balkans. He married a Slovenian duchess in 1406. He was the main defense against the two greatest military threats to Christendom of the fifteenth century—the Hussites and the Turks. He bore the crown of Hungary (1387), Germany (1411), Bohemia (1419) and eventually the imperial crown of the Holy Roman Empire (1433). Sigismund's power was impressive but widely diffused, and his military strength did not always match the rank and extent of his titles.

He acquired his first royal crown in Hungary. It would remain his mainstay and primary source for the men, money and troops he needed to achieve his great ambitions. The first of these was to win the crown of Germany, a title he later upgraded to Holy Roman Emperor. He received little from this title in terms soldiers and finance, but it granted him the prestige necessary to summon and even partially preside over the Council of Constance and help direct the Council of Basel. His status as secular guardian of the Church translated into military and financial support, notably through the institution of crusading. This he desperately needed to secure his other kingdom—Bohemia. After inviting the anti-clerical preacher John Hus to travel from Prague to the council of Constance, where

[37] This section is based primarily on Engel, The Realm of St. Stephen, pp. 195–243; Elemér Mályusz, Kaiser Sigismund in Ungarn 1387–1437 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), pp. 7–187; and Held, *Hunyadi*, pp. 17–33.

Sigismund personally vouched for his safety, the king had him burned for heresy. This only exacerbated the problem. Although Sigismund officially obtained the Bohemian crown in 1419, throughout his entire reign the country was more or less in a state of revolution, the situation being ultimately resolved in the same year as his death. Hussite commanders, through their employment of the tabor or wagenburg, consistently defeated crusade after painstakingly organized crusade. Sigismunds' troubles on this front led to long absences from his primary domain of Hungary.

Prior to becoming king of Hungary Sigismund had been designated as a potential heir to the Kingdom of Poland. In 1381 he was sent to Krakow, the Polish capital, to learn the language and customs in the hopes that he would inherit the crown through marriage. Yet in 1382 he married a Hungarian princess and became king of Hungary instead in 1387.

His reign did not begin well. He was elected to his position by a league of barons who were against the centralizing tendencies of Sigismund's predecessor, Louis of Anjou. As was universally the case in the Middle Ages, elections entailed concessions to the electors. These concessions were readily made. Yet Sigismund was an extremely capable ruler, and he knew that as an outsider he needed friends. The easiest means to procure them was to buy them. This he did by doling out the castles and other lands of the royal demesne, so much so that by 1396, eighty of the 150 castles that had belonged to the Crown were now under private control. These were concentrated further within a few noble families, only thirty of which, most of them league members, owned half the castles by 1396.[38] An important consequence of the shrinking royal demesne was an increase in the governing role of the nobility. This meant that Sigismund, in order to re-establish the measure of royal control enjoyed by his predecessors, was forced to forge personal relationships and loyalties with the barons and other dignitaries of the kingdom in a way that his predecessors hadn't. "Sigismund's exceptional authority was based not upon the royal honors, as had been the case under the Angevins, but upon his own prestige and the support of his barons."[39]

One of his most important tools for exercising this influence was the Order of the Dragon. The order was founded in 1408 after a victory in Bosnia and in the beginning its members consisted of Sigismund, his wife Barbara, and 22 domestic barons as well as several foreign rulers. The institution was part chivalric order, part political alliance and part governmental

[38] Engel, p. 200; Mályusz, p. 167.
[39] Engel, p. 215.

clique. It was typical of the way Sigismund exercised power informally and indirectly but with noteworthy effectiveness. Długosz describes a scene in which membership was offered to Witold, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, who at that time was rival of the Polish king and therefore a possible ally for Sigismund. Długosz's passage describes not only the order's insignia, but also clearly indicates its political purpose:

> … There came an Austrian knight, Leonard, who had been sent by Sigismund king of the Romans and Bohemians and bearing for him the insignia of his order. Anyone accepting this [insignia] bound himself by formal oath to abide by certain rules, namely that those who had been inducted in the order would serve one another in good times and in bad and would never desert one another. The dragon of the aforementioned order's insignia was in a round shape with the head swallowing the tail with open jaws and belching forth flames, with blood sprinkled along the spine of the back in the shape of a cross. Upon this was placed a crucifix emitting rays (spokes) the middle of which contained an inscription: "O how merciful is God the just and clement."[40] This insignia was offered in the presence of all the ambassadors. As far as entering the society Duke Witold responded that he could in no way take an oath of league and brotherhood, lest by swearing another oath he might seem to violate the oath he had made to King Wladislas of Poland... The insignia of the order was sent to ensnare the friendship of Duke Witold, that Witold might become a friend and ally of the empire. Thus the words of the prophet would be fulfilled: "This dragon, which you created to deceive him,"[41] is indeed this dragon. And it appeared writhing and sprinkled with blood formed in the shape of a cross, whereby its author signifies the blood of Christians which ought to be poured out in wars.[42]

As Długosz's passage indicates, the dragon was adopted to symbolize the struggle against Satan, invoking the symbology of Saint George, who was usually depicted victorious over a dragon and who was also the patron saint of crusading. Under this symbol the orders members were expected to remain faithful to one another in defense of the True Faith against heathens and heretics, even to the point of shedding their own blood. Though these enemies of the Faith were not explicitly enumerated, the Turks and the Hussites, the chief foreign military threats to Sigismund's reign, surely

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[40] "O quam misericors est Deus iustus et clemens."

[41] The vulgate latin text Długosz cites is from Psalm 23, in Latin it reads: "Draco ille, quem formasti ad illudendum ei." I have translated it thus, since it reflects Długosz' intention. The problem hinges around the word *illudendum*, which in vulgate Latin can mean "mock, delude, decieve, laugh at, play, ruin, disgrace, deride." Most modern translators, based on the Greek, choose to interprete the word as "play," but Długosz obviously wishes to point out the subterfuge inherent in giving the dragon to Witold, hence my translation as "deceive."

[42] Długosz, *Annales 1413–1430*, Book XI, pp. 270–271.

topped the list. The order thus exemplifies the marriage of chivalric ideals and the religious fervor of crusade to concrete political objectives. Aside from Witold, other foreigners were offered membership as well. The most famous was Vlad Dracul, whose name, as well as the name of his infamous son, ultimately derived from the dragon-shaped symbol of the order. The other rulers of the buffer states in Bosnia and Serbia were likewise members, and the order served as a framework in which Sigismund could express and exercise his policies against Ottoman expansion. Others, both foreign and Hungarian, who possessed "a good and virtuous humanity (*virtuosi et bonae humanitatis*)", were brought into the order based on merits or talents. Among these were the legendary knight Zawisza Czarny and the knight-turned-bard Oswald von Wolkenstein, who was depicted in a famous portrait wearing the order's insignia. Domestically, the order's members comprised the ruling clique of Hungary, and constituted a core group of noblemen upon whom Sigismund could rely in his absence and in time of need.[43] For the nobility, membership was synonymous with access to power, privileges and benefices.[44] It was also a formalized means to share power with the king. According to their charter the members were considered equals, and any issues with a member of the order could only be judged by the order members as a whole. Yet Sigismund ignored these principles when they did not seem to work in his favor.[45]

Such was the personal nature of Sigismund's rule in Hungary, and though it was effective, its effectiveness was bound up with his person and the relationships he had forged over decades of rule. The greater part of his royal authority passed along with him. Two kings would rule Hungary over the next seven years, and both would start their reigns without the ties of loyalty and prestige that were the cement of the kingdom's edifice during the latter part of Sigismund's reign. This became first apparent during the succession of Albert, who would reign as king of Hungary less than two years. Albert had a strong dynastic claim through his wife, Sigismund's daughter. Moreover, he had had years to forge his own personal ties to the Hungarian nobility. Yet Wladislas, who was elected and then crowned in

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[43] Mályusz, p. 79: "Für Sigismund bestand die Bedeutung des Drachenordens darin, daß er das diplomatische Spiel, das ihm zunächst ein Vergnügen war, und das er nach dem Erlangen der deutschen Königswürde zur Ausübung seiner Macht brauchte, ungestört betreiben konnte. Die Organisation befreite ihn von den Alltagssorgen der ungarischen Regierung. Er konnte jahrelang ohne Bedenken im Ausland verweilen, da seine Anhänger für das Land Sorge trugen und seinen Intentionen entsprechende Maßnahmen trafen."

[44] Mályusz, p. 76.

[45] Ibid., p. 77.

1440, entered the kingdom under more or less the same conditions as Sigismund had at the beginning of his reign in 1387. He was an elected foreigner with little basis of support, forced to govern a kingdom threatened by civil war. Unlike Sigismund, who had half a century to build his *familia* and consolidate his position, Wladislas would die a few years after assuming the throne, cut down at Varna.

The Ottoman-Hungarian Conflict to 1437

Before continuing, it is worth discussing the history and nature of the Turkish threat more in depth, so as to better understand the anxieties, motivations, and priorities of the Hungarian nobility at the time of Sigismund's death, Albert's brief reign and Wladislas' election to the throne.[46] The Ottomans had been present in the Balkans for nearly a century before Varna. In 1354 the sultan seized Gallipoli, thereby securing his passage across the straits into Europe. From this point on, the Ottoman advance can be described as an unrelenting, yet gradual progression that was not fully complete until the Hungarian defeat at Mohacs in 1526. The Hungarian response was in most instances a reaction to Ottoman gains and aggression, and can therefore also be described as gradual. There are some noteworthy exceptions to this characterization in which the nations of Christendom, led by Hungary, attempted to seize the initiative and take the fight to the Ottomans. The years of Wladislas' reign constitute such an exception.

Louis I, King of Hungary (1342–1382) and of Poland (1370–1382) considered the Ottomans as but one contender among numerous others in the struggle for Balkan hegemony. He offered no assistance to Amadeus VI of Savoy in his crusade against the Turks in 1366, and it was not until Hungarian hegemony in the Balkans was threatened that he gave the Ottomans their due attention. This threat became urgently apparent with the collapse of the Bulgarian Tsardom into three separate parts. One of these, ruled by "Tsar" Ivan Stratsimir, was rapidly occupied in the spring of 1365 by Hungarian forces and reorganized as a banate.[47] The territory was to serve as a defensive buffer zone, replete with fortresses garrisoned

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[46] A main source for information on the Ottoman-Hungarian conflicts presented here is F. Szakály, "Phases of Turco-Hungarian Warfare Before the Battle of Mohacs (1365–1526)"; *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* XXXIII, part 1 (1979): 65–111.

[47] The Hungarian banates (Lat. *banatus*) were territories along the southern border of the kingdom and were of a primarily defensive posture. They are comparable in function

by Hungarian troops. It was also to serve as a base for extending Hungarian influence across the other parts of Bulgaria, and to encourage the Bulgars in the remaining two tsardoms to battle the Turks. The Ottomans bore much of the responsibility for the breakup of Bulgaria and they wasted no time in exerting their influence over the fragmented state. In this endeavor, they seemed much more successful than the Hungarians. Louis' hope of creating a Bulgarian client state by serving as a Christian champion against Ottoman tyranny backfired. The Orthodox and Bogomil populace resented the Catholic intruders, and in 1368–69 a series of battles were fought not to drive out the Turks, but to expunge the Hungarians. It succeeded. The end result, however, was that the once-proud Bulgarian Empire soon became a client state of the Ottomans. Despite his failures, Louis' efforts to develop Bulgaria as a buffer state between the two important Balkan powers established a strategic precedent that would continue for the next 150 years.

Though their involvement in Bulgaria had led to the first clash between Hungarian and Turkish forces in 1365, the next twenty five years were characterized by a lack of interest in Turkish expansion. Louis was content to leave the fight to the other Balkan kingdoms, who, even when united, were no match for the Turks. Twice these were decisively defeated: first at Chernomen (1371) and then at the famous battle of Kosovo Pole (1389). In the aftermath of 1389 the Serbs were forced to admit Turkish garrisons, recognize Ottoman dominion, and even directly cede certain areas of the kingdom.

Therefore in the initial years of his reign Sigismund was faced with an earnest and direct threat from the Ottomans, who for the first time had direct access to Hungary. They used their new territories as a base for launching frequent and devastating raids against the southern portion of the kingdom, particularly along the border from Sirmium[48] to Severin.[49] Sigismund seems to have concluded that a passive defensive policy against the Turks would result only in the gradual destruction and demoralization of the southern portion of his dominions. Several victories against the akinji raiders in the 1390s, however, did little to prevent the desolation of the countryside or the flight of the king's subjects, who provided supplemental

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to the marches of Eastern Germany in the early medieval period, and not unlike the Ottoman marches discussed in chapter two.

[48] The region bound by the confluence of the Danube and the Sava, currently a part of Serbia

[49] Severin (Hung. Szörény) was a Hungarian banate along the Danube river south of the Timisoara river. It is currently a part of Romania.

fodder to the Turkish slave trade. He determined to meet the Turks -aggressively, and in 1395 a united Hungarian-Wallachian force captured the fortress of Little Nicopolis, situated across from the city of the same name.

In 1394, Pope Boniface IX had proclaimed a crusade against the Turks. This, coupled with Sigismund's own energetic promotion of the crusade, led to the participation of a relatively large contingent of western knighthood in a campaign to drive the Turks from the Balkans. Though Sigismund and the Hungarians represented the bulk of the force, the remainder of the army was provided by the Burgundians, Germans (from the Palatinate, Bavaria, and Nuremberg) and Wallachians (under Mircea the Elder). The army, despite the advice of the Wallachians who had experienced warfare with the Ottomans, insisted on traditional Western European tactics. The Burgundians led the charge, and after seemingly routing the Ottoman force were in fact ambushed by the majority contingent of the sultan's army and summarily crushed. Sigismund retreated to safety, but much of the Burgundian army was lost and many were captured including its leader John of Nevers.

It is undeniable that the immediate effect of the battle was demoralization. As Ferenc Szakaly writes, "One single day on the battlefield of Nicopolis shattered the hopes fostered for half a century that the Turks could be expelled from Europe with the collaboration of the European powers in a single offensive."[50] The campaigns of the 1440s were in some sense a revival of this moment, though never quite as pan-European in scope as Nicopolis, despite the appeals and diplomatic efforts of the Cardinal Cesarini, King Wladislas and John Hunyadi.

After the defeat at Nicopolis Sigismund abandoned the idea of driving the Turks from the Balkans, falling back instead on a defensive strategy of bolstering pro-Hungarian rulers in the buffer states (Bosnia, Serbia and Wallachia), and attempting to protect his own borders from Turkish raiders. The fact that this strategy more or less worked was due to Bayezid I's own neglect of the European theater after Nicopolis. The sultan focused his energies on Anatolia and regions to the east. This decision on the part of the Ottoman Porte would prove doubly fortuitous for the Hungarians, since it not only placed the main Turkish armies far from the Hungarian border, it eventually brought the Ottomans into contact with the awesomely potent armies of Tamerlane, who, as already discussed in the

[50] Szakály, Phases, p. 74.

previous chapter, inflicted an overwhelming defeat on the sultan and his forces at Ankara on the 20th of July, 1402. Tamerlane's ambitions, however, lay in Asia and he was content to simply resurrect the former Turkish principalities of the Anatolian peninsula as the best means for securing his victory. This proved effective in neutralizing Ottoman strength, as the various princedoms squandered their energies fighting one another, thereby granting years of reprieve to the beleaguered peoples of the Balkans.

The failure of the Balkan kingdoms, and particular the Kingdom of Hungary, to turn the chaos in Anatolia to their strategic advantage has been seen as a major failure of the anti-Turkish struggle in the late Middle Ages. Even with limited resources the Turks continued to meddle as much as they could in the politics of the Balkan princes, and held on to the initiative in determining the time and place of major engagements. It is true that the Christian states did not join in some great alliance, and launch a grand crusade to drive out the Ottomans. Yet the conditions for such an endeavor were no longer present in the West. Left to their own defense, the Christian states of Rumelia did their own share of meddling in Ottoman affairs, hoping to prolong the state of anarchy and division for as long as possible by supporting one Ottoman prince or pretender against the next. By pursuing this policy, modest gains were had by the Balkan Christian states which increased their sphere of influence and reclaimed some of the territory lost under Bayezid. By the 1410s, as described in the previous chapter, Mehmet I had emerged as the supreme ruler of the Ottomans. He set about recovering the territories lost to the Turks in the years of the interregnum after Bayezid's death. By the 1420s the Ottomans had regained much of their Balkan territories, with the notable exception of the buffer states, which at this point were solidly in the Hungarian sphere of influence.

A five-year truce was signed between Sigismund and Murad in 1421.[51] Murad's throne was contested up until 1426, and Sigismund's own Bohemian throne was in shambles due to the Hussites who sapped all his attention and resources. The conflict between the two countries for the next few years was consigned to intermittent battles along the border. In 1422 Sigismund dispatched the Florentine Ban of Severin[52], Pipo Scolari, who attacked and defeated an Ottoman force. He and the Hungarian protégé, Wallachian Prince Dan II, were later defeated by the marcher lords

[51] İnalcik, "Murad II," p. 600.

[52] During the fifteenth century the Ban of Severin, whose lands bodered directly on Ottoman territory, bore the heaviest burden of defense against the Turks.

in 1424 and 1426.[53] Sigismund took advantage of the truce and Murad's war with the Venetians (1423–1430) over Thessaloniki to pursue his policy of shoring up the Christian regimes to his south, thereby creating a cordon of safety for the realm. In this he proved remarkably successful, so much so that by 1426 the rulers of Wallachia (Dan II),[54] Serbia (Stephen Larzarević)[55] and Bosnia (Tvrtko II) were all active in an anti-Turkish coalition led by the Hungarian king.

The most important link in this defensive chain was Serbia. Its ruler, Lazarević, died in 1427, and per an agreement with Sigismund concluded in 1426[56] seventeen fortresses were ceded to the Hungarians. Among these fortresses were Belgrade and Golubac, keys to the defense of the kingdom's southern border. Yet by 1426 the Ottoman Empire had re-stabilized, and when Sigismund arrived in Serbia to assert his claims to these strongholds, the Turks had already overrun much of the country. Sigismund hurried to occupy Belgrade, if necessary by force, yet he was too late in acquiring Golubac. The castellan of the fortress instead promptly handed his charge over to the sultan in exchange for 12,000 gold florins.[57]

The Turks were delighted with the unexpected prize. Golubac now became a gateway for Turkish raiders into the Kingdom of Hungary, and was an essential port for housing the sultan's Danubian fleet.[58] Seeking to remedy this setback King Sigismund arrived at the walls of the fortress the next April with an army of 25,000 infantry, 6,000 Wallachian archers led by Prince Dan II and 200 pieces of artillery. Matthew Thalloci, who oversaw the bombardment,[59] succeeded in leveling much of the fortifications, but soon after the sultan himself arrived with a large army to relieve the beleaguered fort. Sigismund realized he was outnumbered and decided to conclude a swift truce. The Hungarian host retreated in haste, and the king nearly fell into Turkish hands while crossing back over the river. Zawisza Czarny, one of the most famous knights of fifteenth-century Europe, was

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53 İnalcik, "Murad II.," p. 602.

54 In that same year Dan II and the Hungarian commander Pipo were dealt a defeat by the Ottomans.

55 Lazarević, who attempted to navigate between both Balkan powers, had sworn to assist Murad in 1421, soon after the sultan attained the throne.

56 For the terms of the treaty of Tata see Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, vol. 2, p. 163.

57 Długosz, *Annales 1413–1430*, Book XI, p. 234.

58 Brocquière, writing in 1433, stated that the sultan had 100 boats at Golubac to transport troops to the other side of the Danube (Brocquière, p. 215).

59 It is likely that Thalloci provided much of the artillery as well.

not so fortunate. He remained with his troops, refusing to cross until they had, and was captured by the Turks and beheaded.[60]

In 1426, Murad's armies also entered Wallachia aiming to place their candidate on the throne and reduce it once again to vassalage. Sigismund, along with Dan, counter-attacked in 1427 and succeeded in seizing the Danubian fortress of Giurgiu. Dan returned the favor by supporting Sigismund in the 1428 campaign to retake Golubac. The failure there forced both Dan and Sigismund to make peace with the Turks, who themselves were focused on Thessaloniki. The two Balkan powers entered into a three-year truce.[61] By the time this truce had ended, in 1431, the political situation in the Balkans looked quite different. The Ottomans had conquered Thessaloniki, Byzantium's second city. Murad faced no challengers to his throne, and no real threats from the east or the south. Sigismund, on the other hand, had been crowned Holy Roman Emperor, and with the deliberations at Basel and civil war among the Hussite factions they became less of a distraction in the coming years. The focus of both rulers came to bear on the "buffer states."

The Buffer States

Bosnia, Serbia and Wallachia, or the buffer states separating the two major Balkan powers of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, were for Murad the most immediate area of expansion. Their submission and reduction to vassalage would mark a long-awaited return to the state of affairs in Rumelia as they had been before the defeat at Ankara in 1402. Once these states were brought under Ottoman control, Murad would be able to go further than even Bayezid and begin the conquest of Hungary proper, his only rival for hegemony in the Balkans. The Ottoman's methods and strategies regarding these client states were simple. They would offer assistance to a claimant, and then demand not only loyalty and obedience but payment as well. They also expected military assistance. This was provided in the form of soldiers for the sultan's campaigns. It also meant the right of Ottoman troops to march through the ruler's territory to

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[60] Długosz, *Annales 1413–1430*, Book XI, pp. 235–236. A poetic eulogy, written by the Cracovian cannon Adam Świnka, is also included by Długosz, who had high admiration for this remarkable personality.

[61] This three-year peace is mentioned in Murad's letter to the Mamluk sultan from 1428 (Feridun Bey, p. 206).

conduct raids and the provision by the local ruler of scouts and the necessary intelligence to conduct these operations effectively. Any disobedience stood ready to be punished by the release of the akinji and the armies of the marcher lords.

Unlike the Ottomans, Sigismund did not wish to reduce these buffer states to direct vassalage, but instead "the essence of Sigismund's policy was to give them an interest in acknowledging Hungarian overlordship."[62] He did this by offering them estates within his own kingdom and armed support against the rivals put forth by the Turks. What he expected in return was "neither taxation nor unwavering fidelity but sacrifice."[63] He left them to accomplish this as they saw fit, even if it meant limited cooperation with the Ottomans. In this way he could minimize the akinji and marcher lords' access to his kingdom, and make it difficult for the Ottomans to launch a full-scale invasion.

Serbia

The most important among buffer states was the Despotate of Serbia, ruled at the time by George Branković. Ever since the accession of Murad, the Serbian state was like a sinking vessel which Branković navigated as best he could between the voracious Turkish Scylla and the pull of the Hungarian Charybdis. He succeeded in this with various fortunes and it was only upon his death that the Serbian state was ultimately swallowed by the Turks. In the years from 1438 until 1444, Branković would once lose Serbia to the Ottomans only to regain it again four years later. Branković was born in 1375. He was the grandson of Prince Lazar, who was killed at the momentous Battle of Kosovo in 1389, as well as nephew to Stephen Lazarević, whom he succeeded as despot of Serbia in 1427. At the time of the anti-Turkish wars of the 1440s George was one of the eldest and most experienced statesmen and military leaders in the Balkans. His knowledge of terrain, routes, and tactics contributed enormously to the success of the first invasion of the Ottoman hinterland in 1443. His absence in 1444 had the opposite effect.

George gained this knowledge by surviving the various disasters, threats, and upheavals that shook the kingdom of Serbia from the end of the fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth century. He had been alive during the battle of

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[62] Engel, *The Realm*, p. 232.
[63] Ibid.

Kosovo (1389), and had seen the Turks persecute his father and family. He had campaigned as a vassal of the sultan along with other members of his family in the Ottoman dynastic wars in the Balkans in the early 15th century. He had fought domestic wars with the Lazarević, and eventually negotiated his succession to the despotate. George was above all a survivor, possessed of clarity of vision, flexibility of approach, and a decisive sense of timing.

From the south of Serbia pressed the expansive weight of the Ottoman Empire, and to the north loomed the Hungarian *Antemurale Christianitatis*. Caught in the middle, George struggled for his country's (and his own) mere existence. One might assume that Branković would favor his Christian neighbors to the north, yet reality demanded that he cajole and satisfy the sultan, whose armed might often inspired more fear and demanded more respect. As mentioned above, Branković's predecessor had bequeathed a number of fortresses on his death to the Hungarians. This angered the Ottomans, who saw it as a Serbian betrayal, and in 1428, at the same time as the Hungarian siege of Golubac, they seized a large swath of territories in south-east and eastern Serbia including Nish and Kruševac. In order to further stave off Ottoman aggression, Branković offered Murad II the hand of his ten-year old daughter, Mara, along with a generous dowry, although the marriage itself would only take place eight years later (see below). Branković was forced to pay a yearly tribute to the sultan of 50,000 ducats, as well as contribute two thousand riders to the Ottoman host, commanded by himself or one of his sons.[64] As Doukas put it, "he reflected upon the caprices of the dragon: if he were given enough to eat to allay his hunger, he might be content for a while; if he were not satisfied, however, he would then open his mouth wide and proceed to gulp down both Serbia and Bulgaria and all his paternal lands."[65]

George by no means placed all of his eggs in the Ottoman basket. His younger daughter was married to Ulrich of Cilli in 1433. Ulrich was not only one of the most powerful magnates in the northern Balkans, he was the nephew of Sigismund's wife, Barbara, and cousin to Sigismund's daughter / future queen / future queen-mother—Elizabeth. Branković was twice married to women of the most purple Byzantine blood, his second wife being the daughter of Matthew Kantakuzenos. Another of his daughters, Melissa, married the Albanian lord Alexis Spano.[66] With these marriages,

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64 Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, vol. 2, p. 165. See also Brocquière, p. 209.
65 Doukas, p. 175.
66 Brocquière, p. 210, note 1.

as with his other policies, George sought to keep his options open and hedge his bets, so as to seize the opportunities that might one day present themselves.

Sigismund saw Branković as a useful servant in the defense against the Ottomans, which is why he agreed to ratify his succession to the despotate. Yet Sigismund was not naive. He realized that given the despot's position he could only trust him so far. Instead Sigismund employed carrots as well as sticks, and George was granted numerous lands in Hungary. These proved to be an important source of income for the despot, indeed the most important after the collapse of Serbia in 1439. They were also collateral for the Hungarian kings who stood ready to confiscate them should George's loyalty fail, as occurred under Wladislas in 1440. It was the income from these lands, as well as the enormously profitable mines at Novo Brdo, which financed the construction of the new fortress residence at Smederevo. This edifice became the Ottoman *casus belli* in their annexation of Serbia in 1439.

Wallachia

Sigismund's intense interest in controlling the Wallachian throne revolved around the province of Transylvania. The voivodeship of Transylvania, which was the largest single administrative entity in the kingdom, was characterized in the fifteenth century by a multi-ethnic and diverse population primarily composed of Szekelers (of shared origin with the Hungarians), Vlachs (ethnic Romanians) and Saxons (ethnic Germans). Each group had different rights and obligations to the crown. The Saxons, who had migrated there several hundred years prior, were the dominant ethnic group in the sizeable cities of southeast Transylvania and controlled much of the mercantile activity and nascent industry in the region. Most of their trade was with and through neighboring Wallachia. There were thus not only political, but ethnic and commercial ties between Transylvania and Wallachia. The profitable trade routes that ran between the two were by no coincidence the same routes used by the Ottomans to conduct raids. For the Ottomans, one of their main interests in maintaining their suzerainty over Wallachia was that it provided them access to these routes and therefore to the relatively wealthy regions of southern Hungary. Aside from this, Murad II was himself keen to secure Wallachia, thereby proving he was the equal of both his father and grandfather who had succeeded, albeit temporarily, in reducing Wallachia to a vassal state.

As mentioned earlier Dan II was forced under increasing Ottoman pressure to sign a peace treaty with the sultan in 1428. In 1431, after Sigismund's truce with the Ottomans ended, the Hungarians succeeded in placing their own candidate, Alexander Aldea, on the throne. The town of Braşov (Kronstadt), whose well-being was dependent on trade with Wallachia, also contributed to the campaign.[67] The next year the Turks sent a large army to bring Wallachia back in line. Aldea was forced not only to accept Turkish suzerainty, but also to accompany the Ottomans on their raid into Transylvania. Braşov itself was besieged for several days.[68] Twice the Hungarians had succeeded in placing their candidate in power only to have him later yield to Ottoman pressure.

Aldea died of illness in 1436, and Sigismund took advantage of the situation to put Vlad II Dracul on the throne. Dracul had been raised in Hungary but had been living in exile in Transylvania. His loyalties to the kingdom were perceived as strong. He was pro-Catholic, a son of Mircea the Elder, and a member of the Draculesti branch of the House of Basarab whose main rivals were the Danesti branch of the same family. He was also a member of Sigismund's Order of the Dragon, which eventually led to the adoption of his sobriquet, Dracul. Yet Dracul still had to contend with the Ottomans, who were by no means willing to let him rule Wallachia on behalf of Hungary. Just as his predecessors, he was forced to try and please two masters, ultimately pleasing none.

Bosnia

The Turkish conquests in Serbia in the late 1420s had important consequences for the other major state on the western end of Sigismund's *cordon sanitaire*—Bosnia.[69] Bosnia had reached its apogee under Tvrtko I, who died in 1391, yet throughout the reign of Sigismund it fell more and more under Hungarian influence. In 1430 the new king, Tvrtko II, was still securely in Sigismund's camp. He had married the emperor's niece, and had intended for his cousin, Ulrich of Cilli, to be his successor in the event of a death with no heir apparent. Yet the presence of the Turks now camped at the kingdom's borders loosened Hungary's grip. Tvrtko was forced to pay tribute to the Ottoman Porte. When he failed to do so, the sultan demanded Vrhbosna (today's Sarajevo) and Hodidjed as compensation.

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67 Gündisch, *Siebengürgen*, p. 421.
68 Ibid.
69 This section relies heavily on Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, vol. 2, pp. 168–173.

Possession of these cities gave the Turks access, and therefore influence, in the Bosnian valley. This influence became apparent when war broke out between the Bosnian voivodes and the city of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) in 1430 over the possession of the island of Canali. In 1431, representatives from the various parties, and even an emissary from king Sigismund met in Ragusa to determine the matter. Yet it was the sultan's representative, Ali Bey, not Sigismund's, who acted as arbiter. A final peace was concluded between the parties in 1432.

Despite this treaty the Ottomans supported in the following year a pretender to the throne named Radivoj.[70] The conflict became little more than a proxy war between the Hungarians and the Turks, and when Ishak Bey took the field in 1434 on behalf of Radivoj, Matthew Thalloci marched forth in support of Tvrtko. Thalloci demonstrated his usual skill, humbled the pretender, and even succeeded in taking Hodidjed, which was at the time occupied by the Turks.

Yet Ishak Bey was an equally capable and aggressive fighter. In 1435, the Turks found a new protégé in the person of the Grand Voivode Stephen Vukcic. After the death of Vukcic's father in 1435, Sigismund decided to assert his rights to the city of Chelmo. Stephen asked the sultan for assistance, which was willingly provided by Ishak Bey, both against the Hungarians and Radoslav Pavlović, who was a rival of both Vukcic and of king Tvrtko. It is at this point that Tvrtko began to fall more and more under Turkish influence, and he was eventually obliged to pay a tribute to the Porte of 25,000 ducats. This situation would only reverse itself in 1444, after Hunyadi's several victories and the accession of Stephen Thomas to the throne.

The Raid on Kruševac

At the time these events were taking place Sigismund remained firstly concerned with obtaining his imperial crown, and secondly becoming the officially recognized king of Bohemia. He was successful in both, but these exertions distracted him from dealing with the growing Turkish threat. As a means of rectifying this he ordered Franko Thalloci, John Orszag, and John Marczaly to lead a contingent of Polish, Hungarian and Czech soldiers

[70] Radivoj was son of Ostoja, who in turn was a son of Tvrtko I. Ostoja was overthrown in 1404, then regained the throne in 1409 with the help of Sigismund. He ruled from then until his death in 1418. Brocquière reports on the presence of Radivoj at the Turkish court in his report from 1433 (Brocquière, p. 189).

to raid Turkish territory in the summer of 1437.[71] The strategic goal of the raid was to lay waste to the area surrounding several of the main Ottoman river fortresses and to destroy the fleet of ships used by the Turks for their transdanubian raids.[72] Beginning at noon on 18 June and on into the night Marczaly and Orszag crossed over the Danube at the castle of Pozezeno, near Golubac, with ships provided by Franko.

Thalloci himself stayed behind and his men plundered and pillaged the territory belonging to Golubac fortress, specifically the landed possessions of the Turkish garrison. On 19 June, after hearing mass and reciting prayers for the success of the mission Marczaly and Orszag's men marched to the Morava river valley and followed it south to Stalać. Moving with astonishing swiftness they arrived there on 22 June. Having defeated the Turks guarding the well-armed and outfitted Ottoman river vessels in the vicinity of Stalać they then burned the vessels using firearms, gunpowder and other incendiaries. The soldiers then moved on to Kruševac, almost 130km in enemy territory, and on the night of 23 June they burned and pillaged the area surrounding this fortress, along with the ships docked below it on the Morava. As the army was marching back through Serbia along the Morava, Ali Bey, the marcher lord of Vidin, assembled an Ottoman force to pursue and attack the Hungarian raiders. After Marczaly and his men reached the confluence of the Danube and the Morava they began to transport their men across. When a number of troops had already attained the other side Marczaly's scouts reported that the Turks were moving in to attack. Due in part to the valiant and decisive actions of Franko Thalloci the Ottoman force was routed, and the Hungarians pursued the Turks for three miles inflicting casualties insofar as they were able. The Christians seized a number of prisoners as well as several Turkish banners, including the standard of Ali Bey himself, who barely escaped the battle. These banners and other trophies were sent to King Sigismund who was then residing in Bohemia.

The raid on Kruševac was the largest and most successful Hungarian raid in many years, penetrating well over 100km into enemy territory, inflicting several defeats, and crippling the Ottoman river fleet. Yet other, similar raids had been conducted throughout Sigismund's reign. The only real deterrent to violence in Ottoman-Hungarian relations was the threat

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[71] See *Acta Bosnae*, pp. 142–144. This was presumably Hungary's first war report. See also Thálloczy, pp. 119–121 as well as Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, vol. 2, p. 174. There is a brief mention of the raid in the Czech chronicle of Bartosek z Drahonic, p. 624.

[72] Thálloczy, p. 119.

of an even greater reprisal, and both sides made sure to answer aggression as swiftly and forcefully as possible. Though it is fair to say that these sort of political and strategic considerations were the primary motivation behind these expeditions, the raids were characterized by a religious dimension as well. The main source we have for the expedition is not the dispatch that was sent to Sigismund, but the copy of this letter delivered to a Franciscan monk by the name of Jacobus de Marchia. It seems that he played a role in inciting the men to battle, in particular Marczaly, who writes in the introduction to his letter, "confiding in those same words, which you spoke unto us," we have undertaken a safe march and fought a worthy battle with the Turks "for the defense of Christendom."[73] Marczaly also notes that the men said mass after crossing the Danube to bless the success of the mission. It was not only in the larger campaigns and official crusades that those fighting the Turks saw themselves as warriors for the faith, but in the continually intermittent *kleinkrieg* fought along the border as well.

The raid on Kruševac had two important consequences. It was the first significant offensive action undertaken by the Hungarians in years, proving how successful an offensive action could be. Secondly, it provoked the ire of the sultan at a time in which other factors were pushing the Ottomans toward annexation of Serbia and the conquest of Hungary. It is arguable that the raid was the sign of a new strategy on the part of Sigismund, particularly now that the Hussite issue had finally been settled. If this raid was indeed indicative of a new policy, one in which Sigismund would finally bring the forces of his various realms to bear against the Turks, it was a policy the elder monarch would never realize. Six months after the Kruševac raid, on 09 December 1437, Sigismund died.

Albert II, the Bohemian Wars, and the Politicization of the Ottoman Threat

At his death Sigismund of Luxembourg held, among his other titles, the Crowns of Hungary, Bohemia, Germany and the Holy Roman Empire. This left not only Bohemia's, but two other European thrones vacant: Hungary and Germany. These were to be inherited by his daughter, Elizabeth, and through her they would pass to her husband, Albert of Habsburg. Albert was well-liked by Sigismund, as well as by most of his contemporaries.

[73] *Acta Bosnae*, p. 142

Though his visage was somewhat misshapen,[74] he made up for it with nobility of character and charm. He was known to be brave, chivalric and generous[75] as well as very pious.[76] Although Sigismund had determined the succession in Hungary of Albert and Elizabeth prior to his death, this did not keep the nobility from exacting certain concessions from Albert in his coronation oath. But overall the transition went smoothly. As a Habsburg and Duke of Austria, Albert had little problem securing the title King of the Romans as well.

The Bohemians proved more problematic. Sigismund himself had only been fully accepted on the throne in 1437, the same year as his death. His passing and the throne's vacancy resurrected the same issues of religion, nationhood, and royal legitimacy that had harried the emperor throughout his reign. Though by 1438 the Hussite revolution had been considerably quelled, and the radical branch of Taborites[77] marginalized, even under the moderate Utraquists Hussite ideas and ideology greatly influenced the kingdom's foreign and domestic policies. An expression of this are the conditions under which the Bohemians offered their crown to Casimir Jagiellończyk, the Grand Duke of Lithuania and the brother of King

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[74] Długosz describes him as follows (Book XII, p. 209): "Princeps mitis et modestus et religionis Christiane amator ferventissimus, nigro capillo, corpore vegeto et robusto, oculis grandibus, tibiis tenuibus, capite rotundo et decenti, vultu hilari et rubeo, labiis tumentibus, excrescenciam et disproporcionem in dentibus habens, que illi dum ridebat vel loquebatur, aliqualem deformitatem ingerebat." See also Piccolomini's description (Fejer, nr. 209): "Fuit vir magnae staturae, venationis cupidus; in armis promptus, facere quam dicere malebat; non ipse per se cernens sed aquiescens consiliis eorum quos bonos existimavit; nigra facie, oculis terribilibus; malorum omnium hostis."

[75] Pero Tafur recounts the following story (Tafur, p. 216): "The next day, as I was at dinner with the Bishop of Burgos, the Emperor's Hungarian herald entered, whom I had already encountered with the admiral Don Fadrique, and who was known as Tusol. He brought a silver-gilt cup in which were some 300 florins, which the Emperor sent, saying that I must pardon him that he could not show me greater liberality, but that the time and place were not favorable. I returned answer that I thanked him greatly for what he sent me, but that I must return the money, as I had sufficient for my needs, and it would be a burden to me to take it."

[76] See Długosz ut supra, also Tafur (p. 218): "The Emperor Albert was a man of sovereign virtue, a good Christian and devout, as well in the hearing of divine offices, as in the acts of piety which he did. He was honest in his bearing and very continent, an open and vigorous knight." See also Thomas Ebendorfer, *Chronica Austriae*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, Nova Series, ed. Alphons Lhotsky (Berlin/Zurich: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), pp. 379–380.

[77] After an agreement between the Hussites and the council of Basel had been worked out—the so-called Compactata of Prague—the two Hussite factions, Utraquists and Taborites, entered into open conflict. The Utraquists were the more moderate party and accepted the Compactata. The Taborites did not. The Taborites were defeated by a combined Catholic and Utraquist army at the Battle of Lipany on May 30, 1434.

Wladislas of Poland. The most important of these conditions were as follows: 1) That the Polish king entreat the assembled council at Basel to further accept administration of Holy Communion under two forms; 2) that the "Slavic language" not yield to the dominance of the German tongue; 3) that Silesia be joined to the kingdom of Poland; 4) that Czech merchants be allowed open passage to the Black Sea ports of Kilia and Caffa, and that German merchants be barred this passage.[78] The conditions reflect the religious, national and economic reasons why many Czechs did not want a Habsburg on the throne, and therefore turned to the other major dynasty of Central Europe—the Jagiellonians of Poland/Lithuania.

The Czech offer was the subject of much debate in Poland, a debate dominated by the Bishop of Krakow, Zbigniew Oleśnicki. Bishop (later Cardinal) Oleśnicki's figure looms over much of Polish history in the fifteenth century, and it would not be unfair to compare him to another cardinal-statesman of a later century, Richelieu, both in respect to ability and influence. We know a fair amount concerning the cardinal thanks to his mentorship of the most significant Central European chronicler of the time, Jan Długosz. Długosz lionized Oleśnicki in his multi-volume history of Poland. He describes, for example, how Oleśnicki saved the Polish king and therefore the entire Polish army at the battle of Grunwald with only a half-broken lance.[79]

Though the story is likely apocryphal, it nevertheless seems that Oleśnicki had been popular at the royal court from an early time. This is also shown by the fact that Jagiełło had funded Oleśnicki's university studies, which began in 1406 at the University of Krakow. Having achieved some education, he served in the royal chancellery as notary and protonotary, and participated in several important diplomatic delegations, among them to the antipope John XXIII, to Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg and to Friedrich I of Brandenburg. On 18 December, 1423, Oleśnicki took the vow of Holy Orders, for which he had to receive a special dispensation on account of his soldiering past. The next day he was anointed bishop. During the later years of Jagiełło's reign until the king's death on June 1, 1434, Oleśnicki's influence predominated. At the time of the king's death, his eldest son, Wladislas, was only ten years old. Though his father had ensured his son's succession after making certain concessions to the nobility, the

[78] These trade routes ran through southern Poland. Krzysztof Baczkowski, *Dzieje Polski późnośredniowiecznej (1370–1506)* (Krakow: Fogra, 1999), p. 146.

[79] Długosz also alleges that the king decided on the spot that Oleśnicki should become a bishop (Długosz, *Annales 1413–1430*, Book XI), p. 111.

young king could not assume rule until his fifteenth birthday. In the interim, the likely candidate for regency was Oleśnicki. This was strongly opposed by the lesser nobility, led by Spytek of Melsztyn. A compromise between the two parties was struck, whereby the royal council would govern the kingdom until Wladislas' maturity.

The personal and political power struggle in the Polish governing council came to a head over the issue of Jagiellonian succession to the Bohemian crown. Here, religion became a factor. Given his military past one might look askance at Oleśnicki's sincerity in accepting the miter and crosier; yet there is no doubting his commitment to orthodoxy. A staunch conciliarist (like many of the contemporary literati), he was also a fierce opponent of the Hussites. This stance, despite his personal conviction regarding heresy, also suited the bishop's political interests. The majority of the Hussite sympathizers in Poland derived from the lesser and petty nobility, and were therefore opposed to the magnatial party led by Oleśnicki. Though some Poles were convinced of the new teaching, there were others who did not entirely accept Hus' doctrines, yet they found in the movement a welcome channel for opposing the overweening magnates. And there were also those among the Hussite sympathizers who simply sought to harness upheaval in furtherance of their own ambitions.[80] Oleśnicki opposed them all. His anti-Hussite posture determined his reaction to the Czech delegation that arrived in Poland in 1438, offering the Bohemian crown to King Wladislas. The king refused, but allowed his brother Casimir, Grand Duke of Lithuania, to accept the crown in his stead.[81]

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[80] For a more complete discussion of the role of Hussitism in 15th century Poland see: Paweł Kras, *Husyci w piętnastowiecznej Polsce* (Lublin, 1998). Kras notes the following (p. 355): "There is much evidence to argue that a sudden advancement of Hussitism coincided with the political upheaval that followed the death of Władysław Jagiełło (1434). After the succession of … Władysław III … two opposing groups of nobles engaged in a struggle to seize control of the country … The bishop of Krakow, Zbiegniew Oleśnicki, became the most influential figure in power, and secured his position by promoting his supporters to the crucial offices in the state administration. In the political struggle, the direct attack of the opposition group was aimed at the Krakow bishop, well-known as an uncompromising enemy of the Hussites and an advocate of the strong position of the church. The activity of the noble opposition, ill-disposed toward the ruling group of Oleśnicki, seems to have facilitated the dissemination of Hussite ideas and the emergence of a well-organized group of Hussites in Great Poland … and Cuyavia."

[81] It was not the first time the Czechs had offered the crown to the Jagiellonians. A similar episode had played out twenty years earlier when, in 1420, in the midst of the Hussite wars, an official delegation had arrived at Krakow offering the crown to Jagiełło. He refused. However, it was proposed that his brother, Witold, Grand Duke of Lithuania, accept the crown under the condition that the Bohemians reunite with the Catholic Church, preserving only certain liturgical practices particular to Hussitism. The Czechs insisted that their new

Despite the Bohemians' entreaties and arguments, Oleśnicki staunchly resisted Jagiellonian candidacy, realizing that this would associate Poland and the Grand Duchy with heretics (the church's acceptance of the Utraquists was hardly complete), and more importantly, it would strengthen the pro-Hussite opposition party at home. In addition, the inevitable fight over the contested crown would only draw the kingdom's attention away from what Oleśnicki considered its main priorities: strengthening ties with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and promoting a union not with Bohemia but with the Kingdom of Hungary. This would expand Polish influence in Eastern and Southern Europe and negate conflicts over the disputed territories of Rus Halicki, Podolia, Moldavia and the Zips. These territories were sources of wealth and areas of expansion above all for the magnates.[82]

The one favorable product of a union with Bohemia was the possible revendication of Silesia. Yet this prospect was not enough to sway the prelate to accept the heretics' offer. Oleśnicki was isolated in his opposition to the Czech overture, and on June 20th, 1438, an assembly of the nation's leading nobles overwhelmingly agreed to back the Jagiellonian candidacy despite Oleśnicki's objections.[83] Five days later the bishop responded with firmness by initiating a confederation[84] to bring destruction upon "any native Polish subject or other landowner in the kingdom who, … without the permission of the king or the council, would wage war against us or the Polish king … or whosoever wishes to promote or practice heretical errors."[85] In other terms, the confederation was aimed at squelching the opposition party led by Spytek of Melsztyn.

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king accept the Articles of Prague, thereby declaring himself a Hussite. This obstacle proved insurmountable since the Poles, who were energetically countering the assertions of heterodoxy put forth by The Teutonic Knights, were unwilling to act in any manner that might bring their adherence to Christendom into question.

[82] For more on Oleśnicki's plans regarding Hungary see Baczkowski, *Dzieje Polski*, p.145. Oleśnicki had plans to marry Wladislas and Casimir to Elizabeth's daughters, thus giving them a dynastic claim to the Hungarian throne. Those who preferred the Bohemian option opposed this plan.

[83] Długosz, p.181. The passage expresses well Oleśnicki's fear of the "Bohemian heresies", the strengthening of which would undermine his position in Poland.

[84] The binding of confederations (Lat. confoederatio; Polish *konfederacja*) was an unwritten right of the Polish nobility, derived from the medieval ius resistendi, "right of resistance." They first occurred in the 14th century among the cities of Wielkopolska, and then later among members of the knightly class. In theory, they were called for in defense of noble privileges against perceived abuses of the central authority. In fact, they were often a mere tool of the nobility applied to achieve their own ends, as seen in the above cases.

[85] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, nr. 248, p. 365.

Albert would not stand idly by while the Poles usurped his inheritance in Bohemia. By the summer of 1438 war had broken out in Silesia between the Habsburgs, the Jagiellonians, and their respective supporters in Bohemia. King Wladislas himself joined the conflict at the head of a force of 22,000 men in September.[86] Albert took the field with an even larger army. By the summer of 1439 the two had fought each other to a stalemate, and negotiations seemed the next logical step. Eugene IV was also very interested in peace, realizing that the fighting in Bohemia made it impossible to obtain Albert's support for a crusade.[87] An armistice was signed on June 24, 1439, and Albert and Wladislas were supposed to meet to work out the details of a more lasting peace. Albert, however, was forced to return to Hungary to defend his kingdom against the Turks. It was on his return from that failed campaign that he died.

The Bohemian war had several important ramifications for the anti-Turkish struggle. One of these was both sides' deep familiarization with Hussite tactics. Due to the earlier anti-Hussite crusades and through contact with Czech mercenary armies both nations were already familiar with the *tabor*, i.e. wagons linked together to serve as a fortified barrier, from which projectiles and assaults could be launched at the enemy.[88] Both Albert and the Poles developed native capacities to operate the tabor with German and Polish troops respectively. During the Bohemian war both sides implemented tabor tactics in cooperation with native Czech forces. As mentioned above, Czech mercenaries had already fought with the Hungarians at Kruševac in 1437. And it was mercenaries on the Hussite model that Albert marched with from Vienna to Hungary in 1439, where they would have mingled with members of the Hungarian feudal levy. The impotence of the feudal levy meant that Albert had to withdraw from the field before he had the opportunity to employ the tabor against the Ottomans. Yet his successor, Wladislas, along with Hunyadi, would later apply these tactics against the Turks with startling success.[89]

The main theater for the war between the Habsburgs and Jagiellonians was understandably Bohemia and Silesia. The Kingdom of Hungary com-

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[86] It is interesting perhaps to note that this force was roughly equivalent in size to the force that marched on the Turks at Varna.

[87] See chapter one.

[88] Hunyadi, for example, encountered the tabor as part of Sigismund's army in 1436 while serving in Bohemia. See Held, *Hunyadi*, p. 12.

[89] At the siege of mount Tabor, both the defenders, consisting of Polish and Czech forces, and the attackers, comprised of Habsburg and Czech forces, deployed their camps in the Hussite manner. Długosz, p. 185.

prised a tertiary theater, which, although minor in terms of the war, is of major importance for our topic.[90] The Polish king realized that for any action in the north to be successful, his southern flank had to be protected as well. On the one hand, some of Albert's subjects and retainers might wish to come to his aid. The best way to prevent this was to cut off the main routes of travel and supply, as well as take the fight to the Hungarians themselves. On the other hand, the Poles wanted to avoid all-out war with Hungary, not only because this would force a two-front war, but also because the magnatial party, led by Oleśnicki, had maintained and continued to maintain hopes that a Jagiellonian would one day wear the crown of St. Stephen. A war with Hungary would render this prospect all-but impossible. The solution, then, was a delicate combination of limited military action and concentrated diplomacy. The fact that Hungary never entered into all-out war with Poland is a testament to the success of the kingdom in carrying out this strategy.

The fact that Albert faced two enemies in 1438–1439, Poland and the Ottomans, raised important questions regarding the Jagiellonians' image as a defender and advocate of the Christian faith. Albert used the Turkish threat as a tool in an aggressive propaganda war, claiming that Poland was working in conjunction, if not outright allying itself, with the scourge of Christendom. This, combined with doubts sewn in earlier decades about the Jagiellonians' Christian orthodoxy, was used to undercut the Jagiellonians' diplomatic standing in the various courts of Europe. The whole episode is an excellent example of how the infidel threat was used as a diplomatic tool both to garner support and deny support to one's enemies. In this respect, Albert II and later Wladislas were not unlike Murad. Murad II had adopted the role of leading the jihad to expand the Abode of Islam, Albert and eventually Wladislas took on the role of *defensor christianitatis*, or defender of Christendom. Though we have no reason to doubt Murad, Albert or Wladislas' sincerity in these roles, it is likewise the case that they did not hesitate to extract political benefits from them when possible.

To fully understand the nature of Albert's accusations one needs to look back to the century's earlier conflicts. The problem began with Wladislas Jagiełło's accession in 1386. The Polish king had previously been a Lithuanian pagan. His conversion to Christianity was a pre-condition to marrying

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[90] For a fuller description of Polish military activity in Hungary see Roman Heck, *Tabor a kandydatura Jagiellońska w Czechah (1438–1444)* (Wrocław: Zakład narodowy im. Ossolińskich-Wydawnictwo, 1964), pp. 84–88 and 144–146.

Jadwiga, the heir of Louis of Anjou and the reigning female monarch. One of the reasons for Jagiełło's selection as king was to create a Polish-Lithuanian alliance to combat the powerful Teutonic Knights. The choice proved effective, and Jagiełło's reign was marked by a series of struggles with the order. These battles were ideological as well as physical, and throughout Europe the Teutonic Knights propagated the image of Jagiełło, and by extension the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom, as Christian in name only. Persisting in paganism, as the knights claimed, the adoption of Christianity by the Lithuanians had been superficial and purely for political reasons.

This image of the Jagiellonians propagated by the knights was at first widely accepted, and it was an important tool for recruiting "crusaders" from the west to fight wars against the Poles and Lithuanians further east. The image was not seriously contested until the Council of Constance (1414–1418), during which the Poles not only vindicated themselves but put the Teutonic Knights on the ideological defensive. In the years following the council the propaganda war continued, and the sympathy of some Polish noblemen for the Hussite cause lent renewed fodder to the Teutonic Knights' accusations. This situation explains the extreme sensitivity of Oleśnicki, and of the Polish state in general, to any assertions of heterodoxy. With Hussite influence in Poland at its peak, and Casimir's acceptance of the crown from a nationalistic, largely pro-Hussite party, accusations of heresy seemed the easiest way to undermine support for Poland abroad.

It did not take long for allegations to surface that the Poles had urged the Turks in their raiding, in order to keep the Hungarians occupied on their southern border and render them unable to divert troops north. Yet a strong Turkish threat served another, more indirect purpose. If Poland could convince the Hungarian nobility that Albert, just as Sigismund, would neglect the southern defenses and divert resources to dynastic wars in the north, it might further the prospect of a Polish-Hungarian dynastic union, a union that could combine the resources of both kingdoms to combat the increasing Turkish menace.

There were, in fact, signs early on that the Hungarian nobility had concerns about their new sovereign's priorities. As Piccolomini writes in his *Historica Bohemica*, describing the Hungarians' opinions on Albert's acceptance of the Roman crown: "The magnates denied that it would be of any benefit for the Hungarian king to rule over the Germans and the other nations, since Sigismund, when he adopted the Roman crown, wandered through Italy, Germany and the remaining provinces and left Hungary open

to the ravages of the Turks."[91] Polish diplomacy was offering an alternative, while at the same time accentuating, perhaps even fomenting the Turkish threat to make the Jagiellonian alternative more attractive. It was a potentially hazardous strategy that required adroit political maneuvering and great diplomatic skill.

The greatest expression of this strategy is a brief but interesting correspondence between the nobility of the two nations initiated by the Polish side in September of 1438.[92] The first letter begins by expressing the sympathy and condolences of the Poles regarding the devastating Ottoman raids. Reference is also made to the peaceful and friendly relations that had historically existed between the two kingdoms as well as their mutual interest based on geography.[93] Shared interests and shared borders, as the nobles attest, naturally entail common threats, and the Poles openly recognized that should the Hungarians prove incapable of containing the Turks, the problem would spill over into their kingdom as well. Finally, the letter states that King Wladislas had set forth with an army to defend the rights of his brother, Casimir, in Bohemia, and "to defend against those who have thrown up barriers and placed obstacles in this matter;" and they do not doubt that the "king would more fervently and gladly take up arms against the faithless (Turks), who themselves take up arms against Christians, were he not compelled to do otherwise."[94] In other words, the Poles and Hungarians share a common threat, the Turks, and they can best counter that threat together. The war in Bohemia, and Albert himself, are the only obstacle preventing the latter from taking place.

The Hungarian reply to the Polish letter is cold, if not outright hostile.[95] There are two reasons for this;[96] the more obvious is the fact that the Poles

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[91] Piccolomini, *Historia Bohemica*, p. 440

[92] The late Emperor Sigismund's widow, Barbara, had recently fled Hungary and sought refuge in Poland. She had earlier been imprisoned by Sigismund himself, when a plot was discovered, whereby she would marry the thirteen-year-old Wladislas upon her husband's death (at the time she was in her forties, and Wladislas in his teens!), thereby depriving her daughter, Elizabeth, of Sigismund's inheritance. Her presence in Poland in 1438 had been useful in winning over some of the cities of Bohemia, which proved sympathetic to her, and perhaps the Poles felt she could win over parts of the Hungarian nobility as well. In the Hungarian response to the first Polish letter, the fact of her presence in Poland seems to be particularly bothersome to the Hungarian authors (undoubtedly of the pro-Habsburg party).

[93] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. I, p. 90.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Elizabeth of Cilli, daughter of Sigismund and Barbara, was governor of the kingdom in Albert's absence. The letter, considering its tone, was likely written with her approval.

[96] Beyond the two reasons mentioned here, a third reason for the Hungarians' irritation is the asylum afforded to Barbara, wife of Emperor Sigismund. See prior footnote above.

had been conducting limited military operations in northern Hungary (Slovakia) for several months. The Bohemian war, the Hungarians relate, is spilling the blood of Hungarian nobles, who through their obligation to their sovereign have joined in asserting the Habsburg claim.[97] In their letter the Hungarians naturally see their sovereign as the just claimant to the crown. More significantly, they depict him as the champion of orthodoxy against Hussite heretics, who are being led by Wladislas.[98] Secondly, the Hungarians suspect the Poles of negotiating with the Turks, and of encouraging them to attack Hungary and thereby forcing a two-front war on King Albert.[99] Though the nobles hesitate, in the absence of concrete evidence, to openly accuse the Poles of dealing with infidels, they candidly maintain that if King Albert and his forces were not distracted by the Bohemian war, the Turks would never have dared attack the kingdom. All of this, of course, amounts to an indirect accusation of abetting infidels against Christians,[100] an accusation meant above all to influence public opinion.

Can one establish the veracity of the Hungarians' claims? It is true that the more radical Hussites supported Wladislas, yet there were moderates and radicals in both camps. Support for the Jagiellonian candidacy in Bohemia was inspired more by notions of Czech autonomy and the right to an elected king than by a desire to practice and spread Hussitism. And there is no evidence at all to suggest that Wladislas, whose actions and policies were determined by Oleśnicki, had done anything to further heresy in Bohemia or his own kingdom. The second accusation is much harder to determine. The Ottomans had sent an emissary to Krakow to deal with Wladislas on the possibility of mutual cooperation. And when confronted with the fact that Polish emissaries laden with money were

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[97] Interestingly, however, the letter fails to mention the Polish aggression in Hungary itself, and instead address the larger issues of justice involved in the war as a whole. This is an indication that the letter was intended for wider distribution, and that their purpose was as much to garner sympathy and support for Albert in Bohemia as it was to answer the Poles.

[98] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. I, p. 92.

[99] As evidence for this they mention congratulatory letters from the Hungarian nobles to the Poles, which had been found in the hands of enemy captives. The mysterious content of these letters is not stated, but the Hungarians seem troubled that they found their way back into the kingdom and made their way into Turkish hands. *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. I, p. 91.

[100] Ibid.: "quod nisi invictissimo domino nostro Alberto... data fuissent et forent impedimenta lateralia... numquam Turci propriis ausibus regni nostri invasissent confinia nec vastandi audaciam praesumpsissent."

traveling to Ottoman lands the Poles offered the flimsy excuse that they were sent as a gesture of good will to pay ransom for captured Hungarian soldiers.[101] Perhaps the clearest indication of Polish-Turkish relations, however, is the appearance of a "notable Turkish delegation" in the Polish capital at the end of 1439 and beginning of 1440, offering 100,000 men in military assistance, as well as generous financial aid to the Polish king should he continue the fight against the Habsburgs. Wladislas' response to the delegation is telling: "Having kindly addressed the emissary, he decided to keep him until he might see how the situation in Hungary would play out after the death of Albert."[102] Certainly the large delegation's arrival was preceded by preparatory negotiations, and the fact that the king received him kindly, and held him until he might better assess the situation, suggests he would have been quite willing to deal with the sultan if the situation in Hungary had developed differently.

Yet the Polish party is not the only one to be chastised for dealing with Christendom's enemies. Throughout 1438, Albert had exchanged emissaries and concluded agreements with Sigismund Kiejstutowicz, governor of Poland's partner-state Lithuania. Sigismund was constantly asserting the independence of the Grand Duchy from the Polish kingdom, and was perfectly willing to conspire with the rulers of other nations against the kingdom in an attempt to wrest greater independence. The Duchy played a particularly important role in shielding the Polish province of Ruthenia from the incursions of Muslim Tartars, and it is no coincidence that in June of 1438 Sayyid Ahmad led a major incursion into Ruthenia after negotiations and agreements had been made between Sigismund Kiejstutowicz and Albert.[103] The Ruthenian subjects of the Polish king pursued the raiders with a large force, but fell victim to the favored tactic of Eastern armies, the feigned retreat, and they were cut down almost to a man.[104] Albert was at least indirectly culpable in provoking an infidel attack on a Christian nation. The Poles did not fail to make mention of this as part of their own defense.

The Poles strongly denied any accusations of abetting the infidel in a response drafted sometime towards the end of the year, explaining and

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[101] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. I, p. 98.

[102] Długosz, p. 210. The death of Albert, as will be seen, changed the political situation completely. Though the Ottoman delegation lingered in Krakow for some time, its proposals soon became irrelevant.

[103] Baczkowski, *Dzieje*, p. 148.

[104] Długosz, pp.187–189.

justifying their conduct as best they could.[105] Yet the front in the propaganda war had already expanded, as shown by a letter from King Albert to Pope Eugene IV. In this letter the Habsburg ruler repeats most of the previous accusations, taking the opportunity, of course, to justify his own policies.[106] The king's missive must have made an impression, since an unknown cardinal wrote soon after to the Polish king to inform him of the text. Wladislas, however, had already written a response to Eugene IV[107] justifying his own actions and repeatedly emphasizing his orthodoxy and that of his kingdom.

It is hard to determine in the end the effect of Albert's attacks on the Jagiellonians. Yet it may explain to some degree Eugene IV's early support for Elizabeth in the civil war that raged in Hungary after Wladislas' election, and Eugene's own hesitation to consider Wladislas as a plausible candidate to lead the anti-Ottoman crusade.[108] It is in any case difficult to defend the Poles' actions from the perspective of greater Christendom,[109] for the most important consequence of the Bohemian Wars is that they kept Albert distracted while Murad II overran Serbia and devastated Transylvania. This frustrated Eugene IV as well, for he needed Albert to lead the crusade that the pope had promised to John VIII for the spring of 1440. Albert certainly had the means at his disposal to launch an expedition and he seems to have been genuinely interested in the idea. For the time being, however, his armies were needed in Bohemia. When one considers that the army Albert fielded in 1439 was larger than the force that fought the Turks at Varna, the significance of this distraction becomes apparent. What it would cost him is described in the following pages.

The Ottoman Campaigns of 1438–39

Upon Albert's succession the tenuous situation in the south went from dismal to dire. The sultan had decided to end his proxy rule of Serbia, remove Branković and seize and occupy the remaining portions of the despotate so as to directly rule it as an Ottoman province. The consequences would be grim for Hungary, for it would spell the end of the *cordon*

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[105] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. I, pp. 96–101.

[106] Ibid., pp. 103–105.

[107] Ibid., pp. 105–113.

[108] Cesarini was sent to Hungary to deal with Wladislas on the issue of crusade only in 1442, in the third year of Wladislas' reign.

[109] Though not at all difficult from the perspective of dynastic policy, a consideration which out-trumped Christian solidarity on almost every occasion.

sanitaire that had been established and maintained for nearly a century. From 1438 until 1440 the Ottoman strategy became[110]: 1) annex and incorporate the buffer states of Serbia and later Wallachia into the Ottoman Empire; 2) launch repeated raids into Transylvania and other parts of Hungary, both weakening its resistance and distracting it from providing help to Serbia or Wallachia; 3) seize some of the main fortresses, such as Belgrade, which could serve as a western staging point for raids into Hungary and soften the Danube barrier; 4) having seized Belgrade, attempt the conquest of Hungary itself, with the aim of annexing at least a portion the kingdom.

Murad's first step was to unleash the akinji and marcher lords in a series of preliminary raids throughout the winter of 1437. These were in part meant as punishment for the aforementioned raid on Kruševac, but they were also to provide reconnaissance for the larger-scale operations soon to come. Turkish raiders headed first into Serbia, seizing plunder and slaves[111] as well as the fortress of Braničevo.[112] Raiders also moved into Wallachia, though the cold weather caused the Turks major casualties.[113] Ali Bey, perhaps as vengeance for his defeat near Smederevo that summer, raided Transylvania in the winter of 1437–1438 for the purpose of gathering intelligence on the region.[114] The destruction was significant. No doubt the Ottomans became aware that there was at that time a peasant revolt in

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[110] I use the term "became," since there is evidence to suggest that Murad in fact intended the full conquest of Hungary in 1438, hoping to effect this through Transylvania. The first piece of evidence is the fact that Murad gathered together the combined might of the empire, i.e. the forces of Rumelia, Anatolia, and the Slaves of the Porte, and that he led the attack personally. Furthermore, he brought along cannon and siege equipment presumably to reduce enemy cities and fortifications. George of Hungary (*Tractatus*, pp. 150–152) states that the conquest of the entire country was indeed Murad's intention, but the idea had to be abandoned on account of the swollen rivers. The swollen rivers may have been a product of the severe winter of 1437–38 as described by Oruç Bey.

[111] See Oruç Bey, p. 60, as well as the letter of Bartolomeo di Giano in Migne, vol. 158, p. 1057.

[112] The name of the city given in Oruç Bey (p.60) and in the Annals of Murad II is Buruc (pronounced Buruj), which Menage identifies with Borac. Jireček states that Borac was seized in 1438, citing the Serbian Annals. Yet a letter from the city of Ragusa to Sigismund from 14 November 1437 indicates that the despot handed over Braničevo in late 1437 (József Gelcich, ed., *Diplomatarium relationum Reipublicae Ragusanae cum regno Hungariae* (Budapest: kiadja a M. Tud. Akadémia Tört. Bizottsága, 1887), nr. 232). Perhaps the names were mistranslated or confused, or the despot was forced to hand over both castles in 1437.

[113] Oruç Bey (p. 60) says it was a failure on account of cold weather for which the Turks were not prepared. Oruç makes reference to a Shahmelik, who crossed from Vidin, i.e. the same route Murad was to follow the next year.

[114] Aşıkpaşazâde (pp. 131–132) is clear that the purpose of the raid was to gather information about Hungary. That the raid was undertaken without the soldiers of the Porte

Transylvania, a fact which made it an even more attractive target for the large-scale expedition of the following year.[115]

The Ottoman raids of the following year, 1438, are often presented as a single raid, but the Turkish chronicles and particularly Bartolomeo di Giano's letter make it clear that there were several.[116] The scale of the assault and the devastation these attacks wrought on eastern Hungary in the summer and winter of 1438 can hardly be exaggerated. The first and largest incursion was led by Murad himself in early June. It in fact constituted more of an invasion than a simple raid, conducted with a significant portion of the empire's might. As Oruç Bey writes:

> Before going to Dracul he gathered troops from Karaman[117] and Kastamönü, Anatolian and Rumelian troops, azabs and janissaries and the soldiers of the Porte, Tartar horsemen[118] and the Marcher lord Ishak Bey and Turahan Bey and Evrenosbeyoghlu Ali Bey. The Ghazi Beys clenched their fists and closed their eyes as they vowed ghaza, [and] thirty or forty thousand Evrenos Bey akinjis ran to each one of the marcher lords. Sultan Murad, having gathered together seventy or eighty thousand troops, crossed from Severin and entered into the land of the Kingdom of Hungary. Burning and pillaging he brought war to every corner.[119]

Murad had also brought along artillery, which he used not so much to seize fortresses as to reduce them to rubble. This would ease the entry of future raiding parties, who would enter the country repeatedly over the following months.

The Hungarian raid on Kruševac played a role in determining both the scale and location of the Ottoman assault. As a matter of policy the Ottomans responded to any military incursion into their territory with terrible swiftness. Rather than simply grant permission for another raid to the

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is also stated in Aşıkpaşazâde's text. Other sources also confirm a raid into Transylvania in this year (See Gündisch, "Siebenbürgen," p. 423.)

115 For details on this revolt see Joseph Held, "The Peasant Revolt of Babolna 1437–1438," *Slavic Review* 36, nr. 1 (March 1977): 25–38.

116 Migne, p. 1058. He writes that the Turks were in no way defeated, which is proven by the fact that the sultan sent an army two or three more times after his return. "Audierunt, credo, et libentius crediderunt, Teucrum esse conflictum; quod non sit verum, hoc manifeste demonstrat, quod jam bis vel ter usque modo post reditum ad illas partes exercitum destinavit."

117 Ibrahim Bey's presence was a result of the agreeement he had signed with the sultan the previous year. See chapter two.

118 The so-called *ğarıp yiğitler*. See chapter four.

119 Oruç Bey writes in detail about the army's composition (Oruç Bey, p. 60).

akinji, which the Ottomans had already done in late 1437 and in the ensuing years, the sultan felt he had to answer this affront personally and with a force sufficiently large to drive the lesson home. The Ottoman Porte's anger had been exacerbated by the Hungarians' destruction of a large part of their river fleet, necessary to undertake a siege of the city fortress and/or to ferry troops across the Danube.[120] The Ottomans did not succeed in rebuilding their Danubian fleet until 1440, in preparation for the First Siege of Belgrade in that year.[121] This meant that Murad's expedition would have to enter the kingdom further east, following a route through Bulgaria and into Hungary similar to that which the crusaders followed in 1444.[122] By following this route they could cross the Danube from Ottoman territory into first Wallachia, and from there proceed along the northern bank of the Danube into Hungary.

The Ottomans gathered at Vidin whence they began their march.[123] To ensure success and protect their rear from any treachery on the part of the Wallachians Murad impressed Vlad Dracul into service as a guide.[124] From Vidin the army traveled to Florentin. Soof after, at Kamenica,[125] they crossed the Danube and entered Wallachia. Following the north bank of the river they moved on and fired a few cannon shots at the Hungarian fortress of Severin. The army then proceeded west along the Danube to Orshova, the confluence of the Danube and Cserna rivers. They followed

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[120] George of Hungary's statement regarding the flooded rivers has been mentioned above. The lack of a river fleet would have rendered it extremely difficult to cross under conditions of high water.

[121] As evidence of this see the Ragusans' warning letter to the king from March 1439 (Gelcich, p. 423), wherein they describe Ottoman preparations for an assault and the construction of a river fleet to be placed on the Danube in order to ferry across invading raiders.

[122] See chapter one.

[123] The route of the sultan's army in 1438 is explicitly reported in a fifteenth century Ottoman document published in Auriel Decei, "Deux Documents Turcs Concernant les Expeditions des Sultans Bayazid Ier et Murad II dans les Pays Roumains," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* 13, part 3 (1974): 1–18 (395–413), p. 9 (404). Halil İnalcik was the first to discover this pamphlet, and he introduced it at a conference where he described it as originating from the fifteenth century. Decei, the author of the article, takes issue with this dating on the sole basis that the town of Florentin, mentioned as part of the sultan's route, did not exist at that time. Yet there is clear mention of Florentin in Andreas de Pallatio's account of the Varna campaign in 1444, when Wladislas traveled the reverse of a route similar to that of Murad in 1438. With this in mind, there is no reason to believe that İnalcik, who is perhaps more familiar than any living scholar with medieval Ottoman documents, was mistaken in dating the document from the fifteenth century.

[124] This is despite the fact that Albert had ordered Vlad to protect the Transylvanians against the Turks (Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2303, pp. 3–4).

[125] Just south of modern-day Mihajlovac in Serbia.

the latter northwards, reaching first Mehdia and then Caransebeş, neither of which the Ottomans attempted to seize. The sultan and his army then turned eastward, passing through the Iron Gates of Transylvania, where the ancient Dacians had their capital and fortress. Next Murad and his army proceeded northeast through Hunedoara, the ancestral lands of John Hunyadi, pillaging and plundering the entire way. Having attained the Maros river, they traveled along it until they reached Sebeş (Mühlbach). After the surrender of this city the army turned southeast, toward Sibiu (Herrmannstadt). The Ottomans besieged the city for eight days, plundering the surrounding countryside. The town defended itself well,[126] and growing impatient, the sultan turned southeast towards Braşov (Kronstadt), whence he passed into Wallachia and after crossing at Giurgiu moved on to Edirne.

This raid/invasion swept through southeastern Hungary for 45 days, ending sometime in early August.[127] The Ottomans encountered almost no opposition save at Sibiu, where the citizens' resistance resulted in significant Ottoman losses.[128] Doukas writes that the inhabitants had "moved out of the towns and small fortresses," knowing that the akinji did not stray far and almost never entered the wilderness in their search for plunder and slaves. For the most part the locals were left to fend for themselves.[129] Albert's attempts to raise the feudal levy in defense of the realm were wholly fruitless, particularly since he himself was away campaigning in Bohemia.[130] The Ottomans turned their attention to plunder.

Bartolomeo di Giano provides a graphic, albeit dramatic description of the destruction in Transylvania wrought by the raids:

> Where is that Jeremiah who laments not just one city but three, four, and indeed innumerable fortresses and villages: I mean a great and noble country, most wealthy in riches and inhabitants but now (that is, since August of this year), destroyed and reduced to ashes? I mean the country of the

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126 See Gündisch, "Siebenbürgen," pp. 426–427

127 The Turkish sources, including Oruç Bey (p. 61) and the "Annals of Murad II" (Menage, 576–577) state that Murad's invasion began in June. Bartolomeo di Giano writes that it had finished in August (Migne, p. 1058). If we assume a 45 day raid, then this fits chronologically.

128 Doukas, p. 174.

129 Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2302, p. 3. In early 1438 it was proposed that the nobles and the Saxon burghers band together to fight against the Turks and peasants.

130 Tibor Károlyi and Kálmán Géresi, ed., *Codex diplomaticus comitum Károlyi de Nagy-Károly*, vol. 2 (Budapest, 1883), nr. 120, pp. 208–209; Fejer, nr. 83, pp. 190–191. It seems that the levies in Transylvania were called up by Voivode Losonci.

> faithful peoples who are called Saxons in the land of Transylvania... It was formerly called Septemsolia[131] but now what it is called, I do not know, unless perhaps "the place of lamentation and mourning." Who then shall offer my head water so that I may lament day and night not that city and household walls were destroyed but that innumerable souls have been deported and have already been handed over to the Devil to be devoured, souls which, it is said, number thirty or perhaps forty thousand...?
>
> Three great mountains of heads have been made there from the dead men who refused to give themselves up peacefully. Their bodies, meanwhile, have been rolled up upon the slopes of the mountains—a horrific food for wolves, dogs, and birds. Priests and monks, young and old, were led away in iron fetters tied to the backs of horses, at least as long as they were able to walk. But the rest of the crowd, including women and children, were herded by dogs without any mercy or piety.[132]

Another account of this raid has been left to us in the writings of George of Hungary, who was captured by the Turks in Sebeş in 1438.[133] George writes that Murad and the Turks began their assault on Sebeş (Mühlbach) soon after they arrived in the town. Yet Vlad Dracul intervened before the assault got underway and negotiated a truce, whereby if the inhabitants would agree to accompany him into his land, none of their property would be plundered, and after a while they would have the option to return to their homes.[134] Yet there were those among the townsfolk who either did not trust the Turks or simply refused to have any dealings with them. They (among them George of Hungary) holed themselves up in a defensive tower.

The Ottoman soldiers, disappointed by the lack of plunder due to Dracul's bargaining, brought their aggravation to bear on this holdout. They piled up branches and other flammables and set fire to its base. By nightfall they had succeeded in flushing out the defenders. They then entered the building and began reviving the half-dead survivors. Among these was George, who was sold along with others to slave merchants and then taken to Edirne. He was to remain a slave for the next twenty years, repeatedly abused and tortured, before eventually escaping and finding his way back to Christendom where he was able to record his story. The existence of

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[131] The name means "seven seats," and is similar to other designations for Transylvania, such as German *Siebenbürgen* or Polish *Siedmiogród*.

[132] Migne, p. 1060 (Roth's translation).

[133] Georgius de Hungaria, Tractatus de Moribus et Condicionibus et Nequicia Turcorum, ed. Reihard Klockow (Köln: Böhler, 1994), pp. 150–152

[134] George says that this promise, as far as he could see, was honored and indeed the transaction was overseen by the sultan himself.

George's account is a rarity for the period, but his experience was by no means an uncommon one, suffered by residents in territories such as Transylvania that were repeatedly victimized by the Ottoman marauders.

No sooner had Murad returned from this savage expedition than he released Ali Bey to conduct further operations.[135] The marcher lord took a contingent of twenty thousand[136] sipahis and akinji raiders and crossed back into Hungary through Braşov. Throughout September and possibly even later he plundered the Szekeler Land, i.e. the area directly north and east of where Murad had just conducted operations.[137] There he encountered an armed force of 12,000 Szekelers, defeated them and even captured a few of their leaders and standards. He likewise burned and plundered the "two seats" of Mediash Province, or the Szekeler Land.[138] Aşıkpaşazâde, the Turkish chronicler, also participated in this raid, during which he him-

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[135] As a prelude to the raid the Turks set about repairing the road to Braşov in December, a fact which caused alarm among the locals. Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, pp. 13–14, nr. 2317.

[136] Oruç Bey cites thirty or forty thousand troops. Twenty thousand seems more likely. In any case, it seems to have been about half the number of troops who took place in the invasion led by Murad.

[137] Migne, pp. 1060–1061 (Roth's translation). "And to lighten our great sorrow we should add the most credible report that we have just heard: after the return of the great army of the Turks, twenty thousand of them or so immediately turned around and with utmost speed attacked the Hungarians—who supposed themselves now to be secure—in a province which is called Székely land, located almost in the middle of Hungary (sic!). And from these people, it is said, they carried off thirty thousand souls. The witnesses are those who have seen not only captives being led off but also the heads of many nobles and princes cast at the feet of their emperor by that Captain (Ali Bey) who carried out these things; and this account only concerns the month of September. Once again in October he sent another army (though if they committed any evil, it is not related)." The entry in Murad's Annals for the year 842 h., i.e. 24 June 1438 - 13 June 1439 is similar to di Giano's account, in that it mentions the capture of important noblemen. (Menage, p. 577): "This year Evrenos-oğlu Ali Bey crossed over into Hungary and attacked the Mediash Seat (see note below). And the Hungarians fell upon the army, a large battle was waged. Afterwards, thanks to Almighty God, the Hungarian Army was defeated, broken and fifteen counts were seized along with their standards."

[138] This passage in the chronicles has been the source of some historical confusion. The cause is the Turkish word تخت which can mean throne, capital or in more learned circles simply "seat." Based on a false interpretation of this word some historians have suggested that the Turks reached the outskirts of the capital Buda in 1438. In reality, the word "seat" refers to the *Zwei Stühle*, or the *Mediascher Stuhl* and *Schekler Stuhl* in northern Transylvania, as these were known prior to the 1520s, based on reforms in the region made by Sigismund (Engel, *The Realm*, p. 114). In the Turkish texts this appears as تخت مهدیه quite literally the Mediash Seat or Mediascher Stuhl. In the Annals of Murad II (Menage, p. 577) it appears to refer to a city. In one of the versions of the anonymous chronicles it seems more to refer to the region of Mediash province or the two cities/*Zwei Stühle* in a more general sense, and not necessarily to just the city of Mediash (Giese, p. 188, note to p. 66,

self captured several slaves that he sold for a handsome profit.[139] Regarding the scale of the raid, he wrote: "The ghazis sated themselves with booty such that a concubine worthy of embrace was traded for a single boot. I was there as well... In short, they say that since the time of the Islamic Conquest there has not been a ghaza such as this one. It was even greater than what they said."[140]

The events of 1438 reveal the unsolvable predicament which the rulers of the buffer states of Wallachia and Serbia now faced. As mentioned above, the sultan summoned Vlad Dracul to serve as a guide and fight alongside his army in 1438, which was in keeping with the terms of vassaldom that they had agreed upon earlier.[141] On the other hand Albert II had personally written to Vlad telling him to assume protection of the cities of Transylvania.[142] Whatever reluctance Vlad may have shown to fight alongside the Ottomans evaporated when the sultan appeared in Wallachia with his army.

According to Aşıkpaşazâde[143] Branković was also summoned to participate in the 1438 campaign as a guide.[144] True or not, such a show of fealty was not enough to ingratiate George to the sultan. The Serbian despot was an obstacle the Ottomans intended to remove in order to further

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line 16): انكروس كجتي تخت مهديه شهرين و و ردى In any case it is certain that Ali Bey's raiding was focused on this region.

139 See chapter two.

140 Aşıkpaşazâde, whose chronology for this period is quite confused, mentions that the raid took place directly after the siege of Belgrade, which was not until 1440. Yet he lists the year correctly as 842 h., i.e. 24 June 1438–13 June 1439 AD. Aşıkpaşazâde's account is in general confused, but the fact that he mentions the raid as the largest in Muslim history, and that it was led by Ali Bey, would suggest not one of the follow-up raids in 1440 or 1441, but the largest raids, i.e. those which took place in 842 h. I have therefore followed the date Aşıkpaşazâde gives and not his ordinal chronology. Aşıkpaşazâde's confused chronology also explains why Oruç Bey, who in other respects agrees with the annals, records Ali Bey's raid as having taken place in the year 843 h. Oruç Bey writes (p. 61): "He released Ali Bey Evrenos Beyoğlu for raiding. He crossed over to Hungary with thirty or forty thousand akinji. He marched to the capital city of Mehdiye which is an important city. Having burned and plundered it he encountered a Hungarian army of 12,000 infidels and 14 counts (ulu banlar), fully armed and armored. He laid them low with his sword. He brought them to his great lord Sultan Murad along with the banners." This account is far too reminiscent of both the Annals and Bartolomeo's letter to believe it could refer to anything but the events of the autumn of 1438.

141 Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 132; Doukas, p. 174.

142 Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2303, pp. 3–4.

143 Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 132.

144 He claims that Branković served as the sultan's guide when the army entered Hungary, and that Dracul was the guide on the return route.

their own expansion.[145] The Porte summoned Branković to appear at court. Yet the despot, who kept himself well-informed of the goings on at the Porte, detected the trap. Seeing that he could not save his kingdom he attempted to preserve his life. Unlike Dracul, he chose to flee the country, leaving his son in charge of defending Smederevo with the hope and expectation that Albert of Habsburg would come to his aid.[146] In order to prevent this from occurring the Ottomans had rebuilt their fleet of ships on the Danube to ferry raiders across into southern Hungary and keep the kingdom off balance.[147] The Porte gathered its armies and marched through southern Serbia. At the same time the Turkish protégé and rival to Branković, Stephen Vukcić, attacked western Serbia.[148] The sultan headed for Branković's capital at Smederevo. It was surrounded and three months after the bombardment began the fortress fell on August 18th.

While still besieging Smederevo, Murad sent a message to the marcher lord Ishak Bey, who at the time was returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, and ordered him to join the siege of the Serbian city of Novo Brdo.[149] The city was of great value on account of the extremely profitable silver mines in its vicinity, which were the single greatest source of the Serbian despot's wealth. Because of its importance the city had been made into a redoubtable fortress. The siege was led by the Beylerbey of Rumelia, Şehabeddin Pasha.[150] On August 6th, perhaps even before the siege began, the Serbs

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[145] This is stated by Murad himself in his letter to the Mameluke sultan in 1440 (Feridun Bey, p. 211.) The sultan's response is dated May of 1440, which means Murad, who sent the letter along with an ambassador, probably wrote it in early April of that year. This would explain why Belgrade is not mentioned.

[146] Szakály, p. 86. Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, vol. 2, p. 175.

[147] The Ragusans warned Albert of the river fleet's construction in a letter dated 8 March, 1439 (Gelcich, nr. 256, p. 423).

[148] Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, vol. 2, p. 175.

[149] Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 136. Aşıkpaşazâde was himself in Ishak Bey's army at the time.

[150] Oruç Bey writes that Novo Brdo was taken in 843, i.e. between 14 June, 1439, and 1 June, 1440. Oruç Bey also says that Şehabeddin was waiting for Ishak Bey while at Novo Brdo. Murad's Annals (p. 577) also report that the conquest of Novo Brdo took place just after the conquest of Smederevo, but mention Şehabeddin in the context of the assault on Belgrade in the second half of 843, or first half of 1440, which would have made it impossible for him to participate in the siege of Novo Brdo at the same time. Martino Segono, who was from the city, also says that Şehabeddin conducted the siege of Novo Brdo (Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, p. 126). Doukas writes that Murad went directly from the siege of Smederevo to take Novo Brdo. Jireček (*Geschichte der Serben*, vol.2, p. 175. footnote 2) writes that trade and traffic from Novo Brdo continued up until the end of 1439. Based on these accounts the city was likely taken in late 1439 or very early 1440. This might also explain Martino Segono's strange comment that the siege lasted "four years" (Pertusi, ut supra) as a copyist error that was possibly meant to read "four months." Jireček (p. 175) suggests a later date, 1441, based on the Serbian Annals (R.J. Safarik, *Pamatky drevniho pisemnictvi Jihoslovanuv* (Prague:

were defeated by Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu in a battle fought nearby.[151] A few months later Novo Brdo fell. Afterwards, the marcher lords and their akinji raiders were let loose on the Serbian countryside.

Albert II was in Vienna at the time but keeping abreast of events in the kingdom.[152] As early as mid-April, 1439, he began to receive urgent letters from his wife and the Hungarian nobles warning him of a Turkish invasion.[153] In the beginning of May, cognizant of the danger not only to Branković but to himself, he responded to the crisis by summoning the feudal levy.[154] This step was only to be taken when the kingdom itself was under threat, and Albert believed that the nobility would heed his call.[155] Albert traveled first to Szeged[156] and then to Tüdorév, at the confluence of the Tisza and Danube rivers. Here he waited for three months for the noblemen of Hungary to gather while the Turks besieged the Serbian despot's capital fortress. By mid-August Smederevo had fallen and the Ottomans quickly re-fortified it against possible attack from Albert. Yet the host of Hungary never arrived. The few noblemen that had assembled eventually

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1873), p. 77). This same date, as is typical, is echoed in the *Byzantinische Kleinchroniken* (Schreiner, vol. 1, chronicle 72a, entry 28, p. 564). Yet the annals are notoriously unreliable chronologically for these years, and this date has to be rejected in the face of the earlier dates given by other independent sources. The annals do agree that the city was taken by Şehabeddin Pasha. Some confusion may result from different dates concerning the seizure of Novo Brdo fortress and Novo Brdo city.

151 According to the Serbian Annals (Safarik, p. 77), an "Esebeg Avranezović" fought a battle against the Serbs near Novo Brdo on 6 August, 1439. This is no doubt a calque of the Turkish name "İsa Beğ Evrenusoğlu," the brother of Ali Beğ Evrenusoğlu (Ali Bey).

152 He was aware that the Turks were in Hungary at least as early as April 11th, at which time he informed one of his subjects of the threat and said that it was at the instigation of the Poles. *Deutsche Reichtagsakten unter Kaiser Albrecht II* (*1438–1440*), nr. 370, p. 729.

153 See Ebendorfer, p. 377.

154 The chronicler Thuróczy (p. 102) mentions that "the military might of the whole kingdom of Hungary was therefore roused to action, the king assembled a large army, and at a place commonly called Tüdorév he pitched his tents." Długosz (p. 209) indicates the presence of Albert's Austrian subjects as well (Albert was Duke of Austria as well as King of Hungary). The Polish chronicler also suggests that Albert had expected more assistance before moving against the enemy "contra Turcos non expectatis auxiliis processit." (Długosz, p. 102). The presence of Albert's Austrian forces, i.e. the same tabor he had used to fight the Poles, is corroborated by Ebendorfer's Cronica, p. 377: "Budam venisset rex Albertus deductis a Wienna curribus falcatis bombardis grossis et multis instrumentis bellicis alias haud parvis expensis ordinatis." Lawrence of Hedervary also enacted several postponements for judicial hearings due to his absence on account of the feudal levy.

155 Ebendorfer, pp. 377–378. "et multorum sponsione, quod mox eo [Alberto] veniente infinitum suorum congregandum pro adiutorio assistentem videret exercitum. Quod tamen confictum esse—nescio, quod dolo—eventus rei demonstravit."

156 The Turks themselves were in the area of Szeged, perhaps conducting raids. *Deutsche Reichtagsakten unter Kaiser Albert II* (*1438–1440*), p. 236.

grew tired of the idle campaign. As the chronicler Thuróczy somewhat sarcastically relates: "The Hungarians … had grown weary of the long delay and the confinement in their camp on the plain, especially since many of them had lost blood and were thereby enfeebled. They therefore, in conformity with an old custom of theirs, announced that they were visited by plague, and in a scattered and disorderly manner withdrew and departed, against the wishes of the king, abandoning the royal encampment."[157]

The entire affair proved a debacle and an embarrassment to Hungarian arms.[158] The Turks were at the doorstep, Transylvania and other parts of the kingdom had been savagely plundered, and the assembled force of the nation had proven itself patently impotent in countering the threat. Albert and some other members of the nobility came to the conclusion that the feudal levy had been and would be wholly ineffective in fighting the Turks. An organized, professional force was needed. On 17 September, when the majority of the Hungarian army had departed and only the king, his mercenaries and a handful of nobles remained in the camp, Albert decreed a new general tax of 100 dinars on the noble landowners and property owners of the kingdom.[159] The king would use the money to raise a great army to fight the Turks the following spring, an army that would be supported by a large number of mercenaries.[160] No one was to be exempted from the tax, and a number of the nobles present, some of them quite powerful, gave their seal and assent to the document agreeing to punish those who might try and avoid payment. It was a bold move, especially since the king had sworn in May of that year that no such war taxes would be implemented. Yet the document seems to indicate a genuine and urgent realization, not only from the king but from much of the nobility as well, of the drastic need for action and reform. Albert, however, would not live to either raise his army or lead it. On the 27th of October, 1439, the king died of dysentery

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157 Thuróczy, 103.

158 Długosz uses equally disparaging language: "Multis itaque diebus in campo comoratus, videns animos Hungarorum timidos et pusillanimes ad congrediendum, videns eciam exercitum suum barbarico inferiorem, confligere distulit." (Długosz, p. 209)

159 Francis Döry, ed., *Decreta Regni Hungariae, 1301–1457* (Budapest, 1976), pp. 304–307. This document is also mentioned in chapter one in the context of Eugene IV's crusade plans for the spring of 1440.

160 Döry, *Decreta*, p. 305.

while on his way to Vienna. He had contracted the disease during the aforementioned campaign.[161]

The Election of Wladislas

Albert of Habsburg's untimely passing and the context in which it occurred altered the political landscape throughout Central Europe. To complicate matters Albert's wife, Elizabeth, was pregnant at the time of his death. In the event of a male successor the king's will and testament stipulated that the boy should be raised in Bratislava by his wife Elizabeth and his brother Frederick Habsburg.[162] A group of nine regents would govern the three vacant kingdoms, with three regents assigned to Hungary. This arrangement proved unpalatable to all parties. On the one hand it stipulated a combined authority for all of Albert's domains (Austria, Czech, and Hungary), a situation deemed unacceptable by the Hungarian nobles. Nor did it please Elizabeth, for it provided no significant role for the Queen, who would be forced to share power with Frederick of Habsburg and eight other nobles. In short, Albert's testament was ignored and the succession became an open question. The nobility of Hungary assembled at Buda in January 1440 to decide the issue.

The magnatial party in Poland, with Oleśnicki at its head, wasted no time in asserting the candidacy of Wladislas.[163] Soon after the news of Albert's passing reached the Polish capital Oleśnicki ordered Holy Masses to be said on behalf of a Polish-Hungarian union.[164] In January, Polish ambassadors appeared at the diet in Buda to negotiate the possible terms of Wladislas' election.[165] It seems likely that one of the agreements reached

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[161] Piccolomini offers a more prosaic diagnosis than a swamp-borne illnes, citing a heat-related ailment and indigestion from eating an over-abundance of melons (Fejer, nr. 209).

[162] Dąbrowski, p. 17.

[163] The contemporary chroniclers make no mention of the Polish overtures. They tend to show the initiative for Wladislas' election as originating solely on the Hungarian side, perhaps to accentuate the candidate's selection as a pure expression of the nation's will. Yet the instances cited above reveal that concerted negotiations began even before the diet at Buda or the arrival of the Hungarian embassy in Krakow.

[164] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, nr. 266, p. 408.

[165] The letter of writ entrusted to the later Hungarian embassy to Krakow makes mention of the previous Polish embassy. *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, pp. 409–410. This document is dated 18 January, 1440, so the delegation must have set out from Krakow a few weeks prior, a further indication that the Poles were the ones to initially promote Wladislas' candidacy (see following note).

at this time regarded Polish ownership of the contested territories of south-eastern Poland— Rus and Halicz—in exchange for a return of the Slovakian Zips region to the Hungarian crown.[166] This lay clearly in the interest of Oleśnicki and his supporters, the magnates of Lesser Poland, who already saw great opportunity in settling and developing the territories of south-eastern Poland and western Ukraine. The party of the lesser nobility had different priorities, seeing the national interest more in the west, i.e. Bohemia and Silesia, than in the south. They pointed to the difficulty of administering two kingdoms, which could only lead to the neglect of Poland, and even suggested the scandal of having a young adolescent such as Wladislas married to a queen quite advanced in years.[167] Yet the embassy present at the diet in Buda was composed of men loyal to Oleśnicki and the Polish magnates. They performed their duty well, as proven by the Hungarian nobles' ultimate selection of Wladislas as their sovereign.

Yet Wladislas' election was not simply a Polish initiative; influential elements within Hungary desired it as well. Historians have traditionally offered three important reasons why many of the Hungarian magnates denied Elizabeth's efforts to control the throne. First, because Elizabeth was a foreigner, and her ties to foreign nobility, particularly the Cillis and the Habsburgs, would further marginalize the Hungarian nobles who saw themselves as the kingdom's true custodians. In addition, these foreign ties could distract her, much as they had her father, from focusing on the Ottoman threat,[168] a threat all the more ominous after the recent occupa-

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[166] Thirteen cities of the Zips had been given to Poland in 1412 as collateral for a loan of 37,000 silver Prague grossi to king Sigismund. The loan was never repaid, and the confiscated cities were not reclaimed until the late eighteenth century by Austria during the time of a weakened Polish state. The cities enjoyed a number of trade and political privileges, and were not beholden to the local Slovak-Hungarian magnates. An agreement regarding the Zips cities explains why the landed magnates of the region, such as Hedervary, who hoped for a return of the cities under their control, supported Wladislas, and why the cities supported his opponent, Giskra.

[167] These arguments are taken from Długosz, when he presents the discussion at the royal court in Krakow in March of 1440 regarding Wladislas' candidacy for the Hungarian crown (Długosz, pp. 212–213).

[168] Elizabeth, though a Luxembourg and a Cilli (the Cillis originated in what is modern day Slovenia), was also the daughter of one Hungarian king and the husband of another. She spoke not only German but Hungarian as well (Kottanerin, p. 26, lines 28–30). Her foreign lineage was not in itself the problem. A more sound argument concerning foreign involvement can be based on Albert's testament, which said that in the event he should have a son, Frederick of Austria would become co-regent of the boy along with Elizabeth. This would greatly increase Habsburg influence over the Hungarian throne. And if the boy were to grow up as ruler of Hungary, Bohemia and Austria, as Albert no doubt intended, this might compromise Hungarian national interests. Yet Elizabeth seemed to reject the

tion of Serbia. Second, Elizabeth was a woman and her would-be child, even if he were a male, would be only a newborn infant. This, it is argued, would make it difficult for either her or her son to marshal the energies of a nation which still expected its monarchs to be warriors. In the midst of the civil war which followed Wladislas' election Helene Kottanerin, Elizabeth's lady-in-waiting, tells in her memoirs of an audience held by the queen to hear those opposed to her infant son as heir: "Then either Ban Matko (Matthew Thalloci) or Waidafembreich spoke to her, saying: 'Graceful lady, even if your son were ten years old, we would not accept him as our lord, as he could not keep us from the Turks.' This was their opinion, that which those of the Polish party had taken."[169] This statement was not aimed at a newborn child's competency to lead, but rather referred to the weak political situation that would result from a regency, which would endure for a number of years until Ladislas grew old enough to legally govern. The chronicler Thuróczy relates the same sentiment in a speech attributed to Elizabeth at the diet of Buda. The speech is almost certainly a fabrication, but it is true insofar as it illustrates the Hungarian attitude towards female rule:

> It was to these men, that were apprehensive about the next king, that the queen spoke as follows: "My lords and brothers! It is your duty no less than mine to take thought for the affairs of the kingdom. I am, as you know, the kingdom's heiress, but I do not think I am strong enough to guide the reins of the kingdom. If you are looking forward to the birth of my child, I believe I shall deliver a daughter rather than a son[170], to the extent that my woman's nature can know this from experience. Try, therefore, to find for your-

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idea of sharing the regency. See Krzysztof Baczkowski, "Stosunek leopoldyńskiej linii Habsburgów do walki o tron węgierski po śmierci Albrechta II," in *Świat Chrześcijański i Turcy Osmańscy w dobie bitwy pod Warną*, ed. Danuta Quirini-Popławska (Krakow: Jagiellonian University, 1995), pp. 16–17. She was no great friend of Frederick on account of her family, the Cillis, who supported Frederick's rival in Austria. More importantly, she saw no reason to share power. Later events, however, would force her to reconcile with Frederick and seek his assistance.

169 Helene Kottanerin, *Die Denkwürdigkeiten der Helene Kottanerin*, Wiener Neudrucke, Bd. 2, ed. Karl Mollay (Vienna, 1971), p. 22, lines 36–40. Piccolomini reports the same thing in a letter written to the Archbishop of Passau in 1445 describing the history of the Hungarian succession (Wolkan, Der Briefwechsel, vol. 1, p. 583): "Hungari... reginam adeunt, regnum amplissimum multis hostibus circumdatum rege carere non posse dicunt, viduam quoque nubere admonent."

170 Despite Thuróczy's statement here, the queen was expecting a son. Evidence of this is found in a passage from the memoirs of the queen's maid servant, Helene Kottanerin, who describes the queen's words and feelings at the diet: "Wann ier heten all ir Aerczt gesagt, Si trueeg ainen Sun, und dies hiet Si hofnung, aber Si mocht der warhait nicht wissen und moecht sie darnach nicht richten." (Kottanerin, p. 4, lines 11–13).

> selves a prince who is more qualified than a woman to bear the responsibilities of so great a realm, keeping in your hearts and before your eyes the kindnesses of my father, lest you arrange for me to have no share in the kingdom whose daughter I am.[171]

While it is true that women had ruled Hungary in the past, this occurred only for brief and exceptional periods, and the latest episode had not been a happy one.[172] And even though Elizabeth had an ability and resolve that was certainly equal to her male contemporaries, Hungarian monarchs were still symbols of power at least as much as they were actual wielders of power. Hungary's warrior culture preferred leadership from a fellow warrior, who in the current social context could only be a man.

The third argument proffered for Wladislas' candidacy is that he could apply the resources of two kingdoms against the Turks, and thereby increase the chances of victory against this ever-increasing existential threat. This was the argument bandied about most often by the pro-Jagiellonian side, likely since it was the most difficult to counter. No one would deny that Poland was a powerful military force in the fifteenth century, as demonstrated in its wars against the Teutonic Knights, Habsburgs, and even to a lesser extent against the Hungarians themselves. It was logically assumed that their full support, acquired by the personal union under Wladislas, would tip the balance against the Turks. Evidence of the Hungarians' sincere expectation in this regard is the condition that Wladislas' coronation in Hungary on May 1st would only take place if he issued a document under the Hungarian seal guaranteeing the mutual defense of both kingdoms.[173]

The above arguments presume a selfless nobility concerned primarily with the welfare of the realm. Recently, however, historians have argued that Wladislas' election had little to do with the interests of the crown, and everything to do with the interests of the nobility.[174] In other words, the noblemen saw in Elizabeth a strong adversary to their power, someone who already wielded considerable influence in the kingdom and who would advance her own authority at their expense.[175] They remembered the

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171 Thuróczy, pp. 107–108.

172 See also Dąbrowski, p. 16, footnote 3, in which he cites the later words of Matthias Corvinus: "Mallet quippe hoc hominum genus ad unum usque iugulari potius, quam per feminam gubernari, meminit enim quod superiori quodam tempore semel sub femineo fuisset imperio et pessime gubernatum … "

173 Dąbrowski, p. 24.

174 For a critique of these reasons see Held, *Hunyadi*, p. 82.

175 See Baczkowski, "Stosunek," p. 16.

heavy-handed reign of Sigismund, who encroached on the privileges of both the nobility and the church.[176] In Wladislas they saw an outsider, someone who would be willing to make concessions on their behalf, and in fact would be required to do so to exercise power. As was so often the case in medieval Central Europe—in the Holy Roman Empire, Hungary, or Poland— sovereigns were more often elected on account of their perceived weakness than their strength. When considering a potential candidate the nobles were careful to ensure that their own rights were guaranteed, if not expanded by the new sovereign.[177] In other words, the nobility was driven by self-interest as much as the kingdom's interest. Yet these two interests need not be mutually exclusive. Indeed, in Wladislas, they seemed to have found a candidate who served both.

It was not only the Hungarian nobles who saw the political benefit to be gained from the Turkish threat. As mentioned above, the Poles took great pains to promote themselves as defenders of the faith and particularly as the scourge of heretics and infidels, partly as a means of countering accusations asserting the contrary. The idea that the Poles and Hungarians might combine resources to fight the Turks had openly been proposed in 1438. The immediate purpose of this line of diplomacy was to draw support by showing Wladislas' readiness to fight the infidel as opposed to Albert, who was distracted by dynastic wars and portrayed by Polish propaganda as remiss in his duties to Christendom. These earlier efforts of Polish diplomacy to vaunt the kingdom, and particularly Wladislas, as champion of the faith in Central Europe began to bear fruit in the favorable political climate following Albert's death. Oleśnicki and the magnatial party seemed well aware of this dynamic, pointing to the Turkish threat and promoting Wladislas' role as *Defensor Christianitatis* in order to achieve and solidify their power. The Turkish threat became an argument in the debate with the opposing lesser nobility as to whether the kingdom should expand into Bohemia or Hungary. Would it not be better, so they argued, to war against the Turks in Hungary with the combined forces of both nations, rather than have to fight them later on Polish soil?[178]

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[176] See Pal Engel, *The Realm*, p. 116.

[177] The above description does not account for all the political motivations, divisions and alignments that played a role in Hungarian politics. There were other factors at work, both on a personal and a national level: affection, local politics, religion, finances, concepts of loyalty, etc. All of these had effects that are difficulty to quantify and are particular to the individual in question. Nonetheless, their importance should be recognized.

[178] Długosz, p. 213.

We should remember as well that at the time these negotiations were taking place the kingdom was under continual Ottoman assault. Taken as a whole, the years 1438 to 1440 represented the most intense period of Ottoman raids, both in terms of size and frequency, the kingdom had ever seen. As Murad would later write to the Mameluke king: "[Between June 1439 and May 1440][179] the mujahedeen crossed the river into the kingdom of Hungary five times in boats. They raided, sated themselves with ample plunder, smashed their idols and their crosses, ravaged their homes and palaces, scorched their countryside and villas, suppressed their images and engravings, and reduced their castles stone by stone as they fell upon their heads."[180] In the winter of 1439 to 1440 alome, two large raids were conducted into the kingdom, and in just one of these 7,000 prisoners were seized. This same observer said that in the last two years, or since early 1438, 160,000 Christians had been enslaved.[181]

It is for this reason as much as any that the Turkish threat and the possibility of an anti-Ottoman crusade became the central ideological pillar supporting Wladislas' kingship in Hungary. It was the justification for denying the legitimate succession of Elizabeth and Albert's child, even if it meant a civil war. It was the pretext for turning Polish attention to the south and the east, and to share their ruler with another kingdom. Without the promise of an eventual crusade Wladislas' candidacy and presence in Hungary were undermined, and so were the interests of those parties which had placed him there.

The pro-Jagiellonian party was able to sway the Hungarian noblemen with these arguments and they elected Wladislas as their new sovereign. Having made their selection, a large embassy[182] with full authority to act on Hungary's behalf was sent to Krakow to finalize the terms. It was in the

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179 This is the same Ottoman letter referred to in the note above. The time referred to is from the beginning of the year 843 h., or June 1439, until the composition of the letter, around April 1440.

180 Feridun Bey, p. 211:

انكروس و اغار و اعليه وفاؤا بالمغانم عبر المجاهدون النهر خمس مرات بالسفن الى مملكة و قصورهم و احرقوا بلادهم و حصونهم و قمعوا دؤرهم و كسروا اوثانهم وصلبانهم و خربوا رسومهم و آثارهم و دكوا اقلاعهم على رؤسهم حجرًا حجرًا و من جملة البلاد التي خربت و احرقت.

181 Pertusi, "La Situazione," p. 352. The source of this information is a Franciscan monk (Petrus de Alla) who resided in Edirne as chaplain to the local Italian merchants, who were his source of information. His letter is dated 12 February, 1440.

182 As many as a thousand noblemen are cited. *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, p. 415, nr. 273.

midst of these negotiations that news arrived that Elizabeth had borne a son, not a daughter. A potential heir had emerged.[183] Długosz reports that Wladislas immediately broke off talks with the embassy, fearing potential conflict over the succession to the throne. But the Hungarian nobles prevailed upon him to accept the crown, citing the official mandate of both the queen and the Hungarian kingdom which empowered them to negotiate in any eventuality, even in the case of the birth of a son.[184] In the end, Wladislas accepted their entreaties, and the specific terms of his election were drawn.

First among these was "that the king would defend [the kingdom] and keep it safe from an invasion of the Turks."[185] This responsibility was eagerly shouldered, and not only for the political reasons mentioned above. Wladislas, as the new defender of Christendom, could dispel the nagging doubts still lingering in Europe about the Jagiellonians' orthodoxy and sincerity as Christians, doubts which remained strong despite the Poles' and Oleśnicki's efforts over the last several decades. For example, when the Hungarian lords offered Elizabeth a choice between two suitors—Lazar, the son of the Serbian despot George Branković, or Wladislas—her response was, "Good lords, do not offer me a heathen, but please offer me a Christian husband."[186] This scathing barb shows the degree to which Wladislas' faith could still be publicly questioned. The presentation of Wladislas as champion of Christendom would work to counter the persistent, albeit libelous reputation of the Jagiellonians as insincere believers.

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[183] She named the boy Ladislas, presumably after the beatified Hungarian king of the same name, to whom Elizabeth had prayed for an heir to the throne (Kottanerin, p. 21, lines 11–13). The boy became known to contemporaries and historians as Ladislas the Posthumous, as he was born after his father Albert's death. His name, almost identical to that of Wladislas, makes any discussion of this period confusing, a fact noted even by Gibbon in the late eighteenth century. The enlightenment historian only added to the confusion, having "curtailed the harsh letter" 'W' from Wladislas' name, perhaps thinking it difficult for English speakers to pronounce, and therefore referring to both the Jagiellonian king and his rival heir as Ladislaus. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall*, p. 2314, footnote 18.

[184] Długosz, p. 213. Długosz seems to emphasize Wladislas' unwillingness and hesitation to accept the crown, perhaps to play down what might be perceived as over-ambition, and to counter accusations of hubris as a reason for the tragedy at Varna.

[185] The other terms were: that Wladislas marry Elizabeth; that he agree to find suitable husbands and provide ample dowries for Elizabeth's two daughters; that he assist by every means her newborn son Ladislas in obtaining the crown of Bohemia when he came of age; that the offspring of his and Elizabeth's marriage become the heirs of the Kingdom of Hungary; that should Wladislas die, Ladislas would succeed him as king of Hungary.

[186] Kottanerin, p. 12, lines 12–13.

Wladislas' role as defender of the faith offered a second benefit—it enabled the king to draw upon the Hungarian Church for diplomatic and financial support unavailable to him previously. At the same time, his new status justified making extraordinary demands of his subjects and allies. Wladislas and his chancellery seemed very much aware of the advantages offered by his new throne, and wasted no time in presenting the king as defender of Christendom, and thereby soliciting support both locally and internationally. Soon after his election by the Hungarian embassy the king wrote a letter to the Silesian dukes, saying:

> in these [matters], which it falls on us to wage against the enemies of the faith, who are most harmful to that kingdom (Hungary), may your counsel and assistance as well as that of the Catholic princes not be absent. For we have always known you to be of good will towards us. And so surrounded by your friendship and that of other kings and princes we might be able to lead these two kingdoms, which in this corner of Europe are the wall and shield of the faithful against barbarous nations.[187]

The letter points to Wladislas' new role, augmenting his status and reputation among Christian rulers, while at the same time expressing a desire for support which he believes others are obliged to offer to a man dubbed "the shield of Christendom."[188]

While Wladislas justified his claim to the throne by portraying himself as Christendom's defender, Elizabeth justified her claim by an appeal to dynastic and legal legitimacy. Her father, Sigismund, had been king, and he had named her as heir to the kingdom. Her husband had likewise been king, and even if one were not willing to accord her the succession as his widow, certainly one would acknowledge that the kingdom should fall to their legitimate son. The obvious compromise in this case would have been for Elizabeth to marry Wladislas, and this seemed to be the course of action first pursued by the pro-Jagiellonian Hungarians and Poles. Yet as her comments quoted above clearly indicate, she despised this plan. Elizabeth wanted power for herself while acting as regent for her son, and she knew that marriage to Wladislas would relegate her once again to a second-rate role in a kingdom she considered her own.

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[187] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, nr. 270, p. 412

[188] Wladislas was not the only one to promote his new status. An unknown Polish bishop writing to one of his peers mentions much the same: "cum rex ipse, dextre dei sibi assistente presidio, cum copiis potencie sue et auxilio aliorum regum et principum katholicorum poterit gentibus barbaris dicto regno confinantibus et infestissimis resistere et rabiem earum compescere et cohibere." *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, nr. 269, p. 411.

In Krakow on March 8th, Bishop John de Dominis presided over a joint Polish-Hungarian religious service to signify Wladislas' acceptance of the throne from the Hungarian delegation. After mass Cardinal Oleśnicki led in singing the Bogurodzica, the coronation and erstwhile battle hymn of fifteenth century Poland. It took another seven weeks, however, for Wladislas to cross the border into Hungary.

Długosz maintains the king was anxious about developments within his newly-acquired realm, where in early April Elizabeth's suspected resistance turned into open opposition after she arrested Matthew Thalloci and Emeric Marczaly, both returning from Krakow and bringing news of Wladislas' election. Wladislas was himself detained in Poland by domestic issues, particularly concerning the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.[189] The importance of these domestic issues was exaggerated by the opposition party, who continued to point out the numerous reasons why assuming the kingship of Hungary would result in disaster. Their reasons ranged from the natural (too much snow), to the political (Elizabeth's opposition), to the personal (Wladislas could not yet even grow a beard.)[190] Yet Oleśnicki and the king remained persistent in their course. In the last week of April, Wladislas finally crossed the border from Poland into Hungarian Slovakia. He was accompanied by a large contingent of Poles, as well as Oleśnicki himself, who had brought along a considerable portion of his personal treasury, a clear indication of his unwavering commitment to the Hungarian plan and his intention to remain in the kingdom for quite some time.[191]

Elizabeth had no intention of yielding the throne. With the energetic support of some of the realm's powerful magnates, particularly the Cillis, the Szecsi, Albert VI in Austria,[192] and of a number of the cities of Slovakia, she was able to present a considerable opposition front against Wladislas. He was supported by the remaining magnates with significant help from the Poles. Elizabeth proved herself a formidable and swift opponent, and trumped Wladislas early on by having her lady-in-waiting, Helene Kottanerin, steal the Holy Crown of Saint Stephen from the royal treasury in Visegrad. On Easter Sunday, 15 May, 1440, she had her son coronated. The ceremony satisfied the sacred conditions of a legitimate coronation,

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[189] The most pressing issue seemed to be that of Lithuania, where Casimir, Wladislas' brother and future king of Poland, was sent to govern.

[190] Długosz, p. 220.

[191] Ibid., pp. 223–224.

[192] A brother and rival to the most important Habsburg ruler in Austria, Frederick.

i.e. with the Crown of Saint Stephen, in Székesfehérvár cathedral, and presided over by the Archbishop of Esztergom/Hungarian Primate Cardinal Dionysius Szecsi.

Ladislas' coronation was a symbolic coup, yet the intended effect of the event on public opinion was tempered by the nobility's anger over the sacred crown's theft. In any case the practical effects of Elizabeth's move, at least in the short term, were overshadowed by Wladislas' swift seizure of Buda. On 14 May, the day prior to the coronation, the king sent a group of his men forward to seize the capital's fortress, which they reached only one day before Elizabeth's supporters led by Ulrich Cilli. A week later Wladislas entered the capital in triumphal procession.[193] In addition on 19 June, Ulrich of Cilli, who was the most fervent and perhaps the most powerful of Elizabeth's supporters, fell captive to the king. Wladislas treated Ulrich with great mercy and clemency, a policy he applied to his enemies throughout the civil war, albeit with mixed results.[194]

The pro-Jagiellonian camp began to attract more and more adherents as a result of these successes, many of them the previous followers of Elizabeth, including Nicholas Ujlaki, Ladislas Garai and Dionysius Szecsi. These and other members of the Jagiellonian party assembled in Buda in late June for a general diet to discuss the civil war and Wladislas' kingship, and to swear an oath of allegiance to Wladislas.[195] Długosz relates the event with characteristic drama, and though the speeches he records may be somewhat embellished, the fact that the chronicler himself was present at the events increases our credulity. In his address Wladislas called to mind the Turkish threat as the justification for his decision to come to Hungary: "[I came to Hungary] not because I was driven by some ambition to possess the Hungarian kingdom, since I already have my own native kingdom which would satisfy anyone's ambition, but that I might, sustained by a divine calling and the help of those faithful to me, defend your kingdom and the catholic faith, which in these areas is so very feeble and downtrodden."[196] He went on to chastise the noblemen, saying he was misled into thinking the kingdom had agreed unanimously with his election, and that he would just as soon return home than be the cause of a civil war,

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[193] Thuróczy, pp. 106–107; Dąbrowski, pp. 31–32; Kottanerin, pp. 28–29; Długosz, pp. 230–231.Thuróczy and Długosz maintain that the people were favorably disposed towards Wladislas, whereas Kottanerin, a loyal adherent to queen Elizabeth, recorded the opposite.

[194] Długosz, pp. 232–234.

[195] The document concerning this oath is found in Fejer, Genus, pp. 37–38. See also Dąbrowski, pp. 35–38.

[196] Długosz, p. 235.

which has proven more damaging than any foreign war, and which has prevented "me from undertaking by my own arm the burden of defending this kingdom against the barbarians."[197]

After the king's speech, which was followed by a dramatic outpouring of tears among the noblemen, Lawrence of Hedervary addressed the assembly. He reminded the king (and those present) that Wladislas had been selected over other candidates, even over Elizabeth's unborn child, because he seemed the most able and most willing to deliver them from the tyranny of the Turks. He continues, saying, "You are our great hope, through whom we believe possible some respite from the insult of the Turks. It is you, whom all of our peasants cry out to as their liberator."[198] Again, it is the infidel threat which is called upon here to rally the nobility to the king and his party. Wladislas is presented both by himself and his supporters as a crusader king, and the savior not only of Hungary but indeed of Christendom.

[197] Ibid., p. 237.
[198] Ibid.

PART TWO
THE CAMPAIGNS OF 1440–1444

CHAPTER FOUR

STRATEGY, TACTICS AND ORDER OF BATTLE

Ottoman Order of Battle

From 1438 to 1444 the combined might of the Ottoman Empire was assembled almost annually. For two of these years, 1443 and 1444, the empire went so far as to proclaim a general levy as a response to foreign Christian invasion. It was the most enduring intense period of military activity during Murad II's reign, in which he suffered his most humiliating defeats and most resounding victories. The Ottomans' primary opponent in this struggle was the Kingdom of Hungary. For the Hungarians these years were marked by continual large-scale warfare as well, not only externally but internally, as the kingdom battled both the Turks and itself in a long, drawn -out civil war over Albert II's successor. As is often the case in war, numerous sources on both sides took note of this heightened military activity, and we have a more complete glimpse into the armed forces of both realms for the years in question than perhaps at any other time in the fifteenth century. This chapter makes an attempt to describe first the various types and numbers of troops contained in both armies, as well as the tactics which these forces employed in combat. Through this brief description the reader will hopefully obtain a better understanding not only of the conflicts in question, but of the Ottoman and Hungarian armies in the fifteenth century as a whole.

The Ottoman army at the time of Murad II can be broken down into three separate components: the Landed Provincial Cavalry, the Slaves of the Porte and levied troops. The first and largest of these was the provincial cavalry (*timarlı sipahı*), which was provided by the various timarholders within the Empire.[1] It is indisputable based on other surviving source evidence that the Ottomans kept detailed records of their own military potential, to include the Landed Provincial Cavalry. Unfortunately, aside from the limited information contained in the Albanian caudastral survey of 1430–1431, none of these documents have survived from the time of Murad II. There were, however, several westerners who

[1] For more on the Landed Provincial Cavalry see chapter two.

attempted to compile detailed information on the Ottoman army in the fifteenth century. Most of them were writing from the time of Mehmet II, i.e. after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, during which time the West's interest in studying the Ottomans increased in inverse proportion to its will to fight them. Some of these reports were based on Ottoman records smuggled out of the country, but they were also shaped in no small part by preconceived notions regarding the size of the Ottoman Army. The report of the Italian humanist Lauro Quirini, for example, seems to provide a listing of beyliks from 1430.[2] Yet the troop contributions from the territories reported in Quirini's list are undeniably exaggerated, yielding the ridiculous high total of 158,000 troops for the Ottoman army at the time.[3] Other authors also list troop numbers wavering between 150,000 and 200,000 men. To accept these numbers would force one to accept that the Ottoman armies of the fifteenth century were larger than those of the sixteenth, at the Empire's peak, when the sultan controlled vastly greater resources in land and men than he had a century before.

Among the several primary sources dealing with the subject two authors stand out as the most well-informed and reliable—Iacopo de Promontorio and Konstantin Mihalović. De Promontorio served as a Genoese liaison at the Ottoman Porte for several decades both under Murad II and his son Mehmet the Conqueror. This was at a time when the Genoese and the Ottomans enjoyed a particularly close relationship with one another. Promontorio even had the opportunity to campaign with the sultan, seeing the fifteenth-century Ottoman army in action from a perspective allowed few other westerners. He seems to have had indirect access to Ottoman records as well. His account of the army is highly

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[2] Elizabeth Zachariadou recently established that Lauro Quirini's work is based on a list of sanjak beyliks from 1430, therefore during the time of Murad II. ("Lauro Quirini and the Turkish Sandjaks (ca. 1430)," *Journal of Turkish Studies 11, Raiyyet Rüsûmu, Essays Presented to Halil İnalcik on his Seventieth Birthday* , ed. Carolyn I. Cross (1987): 239–247. This may be true in terms of the names of the sanjak provinces, but the numbers Quirini associated with these provinces are double what more reliable sources give. Perhaps future research can better reconcile this list of governorships with the information given by Mihalović and Promontorio.

[3] The same is true of several other documents that emerged from the late fifteenth century, i.e. Sagundino (1454) and Segono (1480). These two works were looked at side by side along with Promontorio by A. Pertusi, "Le Epistole Storiche di Lauro Quirini Sulla Caduta di Constantinopoli e la Potenza dei Turchi," in *Lauro Quirini Umanista*, ed. Vittore Branca (Leo S. Olschki: Florence, 1977), pp. 199–205, pp. 234–257. That the numbers are exaggerated is demonstrated by an official summary of receipts and expenditures from 1525, which places the number of provincial cavalry at around 50,000 horsemen (Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 257).

detailed, listing numbers, payment amounts, equipment, armaments, order of march, etc., all in a way that correspond well with relevant passages from other narrative sources. Konstantin Mihalović's *Memoirs of a Janissary* are no less valuable. Konstantin himself served in the Janissary Corps for a number of years under Mehmet II. He not only learned Ottoman strategy and tactics but executed these tactics himself on a number of occasions. His description of the Slaves of the Porte is more detailed than his description of the provincial forces, no doubt due to the fact that he had served in this component of the army. His main value as a source, however, lies not in the statistical data and numbers he provides, but in his descriptions of how the army functioned and fought. They offer priceless insight from a man who was natively familiar with both sides in the conflict.

I have also referred on occasion back to the account of Bertrandon de la Brocquière. The Burgundian's writings are based on his travels throughout the Ottoman Empire in the early 1430s, and are therefore earlier than the other two sources. He had to rely on conflicting oral accounts, knew no Turkish, and traveled through the Empire only for a few months. Yet his information was gathered with scrutiny and care, and meant to impart useful and factual military information, not simply be an interesting treatise on an exotic subject. The reason for this was Brocquière's objective, which was to provide a practical military document for his lord the Duke of Burgundy so that the latter could make the necessary plans for a crusade. This lends the document a certain frank trustworthiness that is not found in other sources at the time.

The Timarli Sipahis or Provincial Landed Cavalry

We can begin with Brocquière. Two of his extant writings provide information on the Ottoman army. The first is the narrative description of his travels through Anatolia and Rumelia in the early 1430s. The second is his critical response to John Torcello's proposal for a crusade delivered at the Council of Florence.[4] Brocquière admits in this document that he had not seen the sultan's entire army in the field, but as far as he can guess the Ottomans could field an army with a maximum size of between 100 and

[4] See chapter one for a description of Torcello's treatise. Both Torcello's text and Brocquière's response are appended to the book concerning Brocquière's travels (Brocquière, pp. 267–274).

120 thousand men. In the text of his travels he writes that the provincial lords, or timarlı sipahis of Rumelia and Anatolia provided about 30,000 horsemen each, with 20,000 men provided in each instance by the Landed Cavalry.[5] While traveling through Bursa, Brocquière actually met and had an audience with the Beylerbey of Anatolia ("Le seigneur de la Turquie"), a certain "Camussat" Pasha.[6] The Beylerbey explained to Brocquière that in time of need he could raise twenty thousand men for the sultan, and that various lords would bring him one, two, three thousand men, etc., depending on their station. This is a description of the mobilization of the Anatolian Provincial Landed Cavalry. These numbers are only slightly higher than what de Promontorio cites for the same region. Brocquière mentions other components of the Ottoman army as well. According to Brocquière the troops raised by special levy amounted to 30,000 men from Rumelia and 20,000 from Anatolia.[7]

The most complete and useful report concerning the Provincial Landed Cavalry is the one compiled by Iacopo de Promontorio in 1475. Although this post-dates our own discussion of the Ottoman military by around thirty years, the information in the document can be tailored to

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[5] Brocquière, p. 184. "Item, quant a l'armee de XXXm hommes qu'il fait en la Grece, ceulx a qui il a donne les seignouries que j'ay dit cy devant doivent estre prestz toutes et quantes fois qu'il les mande, c'est assavoir XXm en la Grece et XXm en la Turquie, sans les esclaves de son hostel."

[6] Brocquière, p. 137. The editor writes as if the person referred to was simply the mayor of Bursa. Yet in the text he states his position as the "*seigneur de la Turquie*," and the number of troops, 20,000, as well as the income given, 50,000 ducats per year, would have been ridiculously high for the province of Bursa alone. Iacopo de Promontorio (p. 59) lists an income for Bursa of 12,000 ducats and a troop contribution of 1,700 soldiers, far less than that attributed to the person above.

[7] Brocquière, p. 185. Within the same paragraph, Brocquière first writes that Greece alone would provide 120,000 men, which the sultan would pay for. That Brocquière himself does not consider this number credible is indicated by his later statement, in response to Torcello's document, that the entire Ottoman army did not number more than 100 to 120 thousand men. Later in the same paragraph he says that he was told that in truth (de verité) the sultan, when he wishes, can raise 30,000 paid soldiers from Anatolia and 20,000 from Greece: "Et m'a l'en dit depuis, et de verité, quant le dessusdit seigneur vuelt faire armée, que au pays de Turquie luy sont tenuz de le venir servir XXXm hommes, lesquels sont payez. Et de la Grece y a XXm hommes sans ses esclaves qui peuvent estre de II à IIIm bien en point. " In another passage (p. 185) seeming to refer to these paid soldiers (though he writes that there were 120,000 total, the text suggests this is a maximum possible number of troops that the sultan could levy, not necessarily what was levied in practice) he states that each infantrymen was paid five aspers (akches) per day, and each cavalrymen eight. The fact that these are paid troops indicates that they are not the Provincial Landed Cavalry, and therefore must be azabs and akinji and other troops of the extraordinary levy.

give us a rough estimate of the Ottoman army at the time of Murad II. The following two tables show the numbers of Rumelian and Anatolian cavalry as listed in Promontorio's document.

Table 4.1 Rumelian provincial cavalrymen per sanjak.[8]

Province	Men provided
Beylerbey	1500
Beylerbey Subashis, two[9]	100
Beylerbey Kadis, two	200
Bey of Constantinople*	1200
Bey of Gallipoli	1100
Bey of Edirne (and Dimotika)	1300
Bey of Nicopolis and Zagora	1500
Bey of Vidin	1100
Bey of Sophia	1300
Lazar Serbia**	900
Other Serbia**	1000
Vardar	1500
Skopje	1600
Albania Skenderbey**	800
Kingdom of Bosnia*	900
Other Bosnia*	600
Araniti Albania*	1000
Arta, Zituni, and Athens	1200
Morea*	1300
Monastir	1000
Total	21100
Average per sanjak	1156
Contributing territories to Zlatitsa and Varna	13400

[8] Notes to Table 4.1. The territories marked with a (*) are those beyliks which were not a part of the Empire at the time of Murad II. Those territories marked with a (**) are those which were a contributing part of the Empire during some of the years in question, but not at the battles of Zlatitsa and Varna, i.e. the two encounters discussed in this work in which the Ottomans attempted to bring the full might of the empire to bear against the crusaders. The field titled "Contributing territories to Zlatitsa and Varna" subtracts the troop contributions for these territories from the total, to give a more accurate assessment of the troop levels for the battles in question. This system is far from perfect. The beyliks in 1430 may have been drawn along very different lines than those in 1475, as is suggested by Quirini's letter. Yet we can still accept these as reasonably close to the number of troops available in the 1440s. Below is the same listing for the troops of Anatolia.

[9] The two beylerbey subashis and the beylerbey kadis were to assist the beylerbey in the administration of Rumelia. They were also obliged, however, to contribute troops despite the fact that they did not possess a beylik, which is why they are included in this chart. Their numbers do not figure, however, into the field computing the average contribution per beylik.

Table 4.2. Anatolian provincial cavalrymen per sanjak.[10]

Province	Men provided
Beylerbey	1200
Shehzade	4000
Alanya**	650
Antalya**	1200
3 Beyliks of Saruhan, Aydın, Menteşe	3500
Bergama	700
Bursa	1700
Ankara	1800
Osmanjik	900
Kastamönü	2,550
Total	18200
Average per sanjak	1820
Contributing territories to Zlatitsa and Varna	16350

The Total Provincial Landed Cavalry based on de Promontorio's information was therefore 39,300 cavalrymen. Of those territories contributing to the battles at Varna and Zlatitsa, the number was 29,750.

The Provincial Landed Cavalry was the cornerstone of the Ottoman army.[11] Having said this, their reliability and effectiveness in battle was often questioned by Murad and the Porte. Indeed, throughout the major campaigns of 1440–1444 the Provincial Landed Cavalry performed, on the whole, quite poorly. In pitched battles, such as at Nish/Aleksinac or Varna, they turned and fled the field in the early stages of battle.[12] Although the provincial cavalry was often swifter, more agile and more capable of operating as a cohesive unit than the crusader heavy cavalry it was much lighter equipped. De Promontorio lists the armaments of these horsemen as follows: one third armed with cuirass, chain mail, helmet,

[10] De Promontorio wrote that in some cases the number of troops actually provided was lower than the amount of troops provided on paper. For example, although the Shehzade (the successor to the throne, usually residing in Amasya) had over 6,000 men available to him, only 4,000 of these were given over to the sultan during a campaign. In these instances I have used the number of troops de Promontorio says were actually provided.

[11] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, pp. 516–517.

[12] An important exception, if Aşıkpaşazâde is to be believed, was Şehabeddin's 1442 defeat, where it was members of the provincial cavalry who remained steadfastly on the battlefield and urged the Beylerbey of Rumelia to return to the fight with his men. Yet it is unclear whether these troops chose to hold their ground, or were merely prevented from retreating by the river.

bow, arrows, shield, sword, iron mace, lancet with banner on top, with a horse, some of which are imbarded (he gives the exact numbers of imbarded horses for each province). The remaining two-thirds are armed with bow, arrows, sword, shield, mace and lance. Brocquière is less generous, stating that almost half of the cavalrymen of Rumelia were armed with only a bow, and that some were armed with only a wooden mace.[13] He later writes:

> I saw some Turks who had just conducted a raid in Hungary. And I saw a Genoese named Nicolas Ciba, who saw them when they crossed the Danube, and he said that only one in ten was without both sword and bow. Of those I saw, they were mostly the ones without a bow, and they were greater in number than those who had both sword and bow. The more well-equipped had a large wooden shield. It seemed to me a great pity that Christendom had been subjected by such men, and it is not very hard to pay no great attention to them and what they do.[14]

The *sipahis*, as these cavalrymen were known, were allowed to collect the *öşür* tithe and *dirlik*[15] tax from their allotted lands in exchange for military service. Depending on the size of the timar, or land grant, they would have to provide service alone or along with one or more fully equipped mounted riders for the campaign. These equipped cavalrymen were known as *cebeli*. The amount (in thousands of akche) required to equip a cebeli varied depending on the territory, but the amount was fixed and recorded. All of the cebeli's expenses were covered by the sipahi. If the sipahi failed to perform his military service, his dirlik was taken away. If he performed his services honorably, his dirlik might be increased. The sipahi had to reside within his own territory or sanjak. Upon his death, part of the timar would be granted to his son(s). If there was no heir, then the *alay bey*, or the largest timar owner in the region, would officially designate someone from the military (*askeri*) class to hold the timar. Every sanjak was divided into a number of *bölük* (battalions). Each of these was headed by a subashi. Each battalion also had its own standard bearer and herald. One in ten of the timarlı sipahi stayed back during a campaign to ensure order, manage affairs, and look to the proper functioning of the region. According to law (called the *harçlık*), during a winter campaign, some from among the timarlı sipahi were allowed to return to their lands

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[13] Brocquière, pp. 182–183, pp. 185–186.

[14] Ibid., p. 202.

[15] Dirlik, or subsistence, refers to the funds the sipahis were able to keep for themselves in excess of what was required by the treasury.

to put their affairs, and those of their friends, in order. As soon as this was accomplished they were required to return to the battle.

Slaves of the Porte

Although Konstantin Mihalović discusses the provincial cavalry in rather vague terms,[16] he is far more specific regarding the second important group comprising the Ottoman Army—the Slaves of the Porte or the *Kapıkullar*. This force was comprised of the personal slaves of the sultan. It was the most well-trained, well-equipped, and at this time the most loyal and reliable component of the Ottoman military. It is a common mistake by western historians to see the janissaries and the Slaves of the Porte as one and the same. The janissaries were only one part of this force —the infantry—and their numbers account for less than half of the total force in question. The Slaves of the Porte always accompanied the sultan, and only in exceptional cases would they serve another commander (an important example is Şehabeddin's campaign in Wallachia in 1442). The men comprising this army were expensive to recruit and maintain, and their numbers were considerably less than that of the other components. Yet their role in battle was decisive both in 1443 and 1444. They provided an anchor for the army and a stalwart center around which the two wings of cavalry could operate and rally to in time of need. As mentioned in chapter two, many of the Slaves of the Porte had official functions at court quite distinct from their military duties, as the names below suggest. Iacopo de Promontorio and Konstantin Mihalović both group these men and provide their numbers as follows. I have tried to make the comparison between the two easier by displaying them side-by-side, although the unit breakdown given by two authors is not in all cases identical.

The Slaves of the Porte can be divided into two main groups—cavalry and infantry. Among the cavalry, there were: Imperial Sipahis, Silahdar, Ulufeciler and Ğarıp Yiğitler. The latter two groups were organized into a right and left component, and these groups thus comprised six total battalions under six

[16] Mihalović, pp. 166–167. He merely gives the number of sanjaks in Rumelia (18) and Anatolia (20), and writes that the cavalrymen provided by these sanjaks, along with the serahors, attained the rather incredible number of 70,000 cavalrymen. His vagueness likely results from the fact that he served in the Janissary Corps, a wholly separate component of the army.

Table 4.3. The Slaves of the Porte as reported by Iacopo de Promontorio and Konstantin Mihalović.

Unit type	Iacopo de Promontorio	Konstantin Mihalović
Yeniçeriler (Janissaries)	6,000	4,000
Acemi Oğlanlar (Janissary Novices)	2,500	?
Zerbottaneri (Gunners)	650	?
Sipâhi (Cavalrymen)	800	300
Ulufeciler (Cavalrymen)	700	600
Silahdarlar (Keepers of the Sword)	500	300
Ğarıp yiğitler (Tartar Cavalry)	1000	600
Solaklar (Seneschals)	250	60
Kapıcılar (Doorkeepers)	500	?
Kapıcı başları (Head Doorkeepers)	?	200
Çaşnigîrler (Tasters)	150	80
Çaşnigîrler soldiers	300	?
İçoğlanları (Paiges)	?	50
Ahur Hademleri (Stable Boys)	800	200
Cebeciler (Armorers)	?	60
Çadır Mehterleri (Tent-pitchers)	?	60
Aşçılar (Cooks)	150	200
Çavuşlar (Pursuivants)	150	?
Çavuşlar soldiers	250	?
Total	14,700	6,710
Merged Total[17]	15,070	11,060

separate banners. They would become a much larger contingent in the Ottoman army in later centuries, yet even at the time of Murad II they were an important force within the imperial army. The first of the six banners was comprised of the Imperial Sipahis (not to be confused with the sipahis of the Landed Provincial Cavalry). These were the sons of lords and significant

[17] There is a large discrepancy between the two totals, with Mihalović listing 6,710 total troops and de Promontorio 14,700. However, when we include in the total those fields mentioned by one author which are not listed by the other, for example adding the janissary recruits to Mihalović's table and the Armorers to de Promontorio's, etc., the numbers become much closer, with 15,070 for de Promontorio and 11,060 for Mihalović. This is justified, since we know from contemporary narrative sources that there were poursuivants (çavuşlar) in Murad's army despite the fact that Mihalović does not give their exact number. We likewise know that there were tent-pitchers in Murad's army, despite the fact that de Promontorio does not mention their number and Mihalović does. The numbers given here refer to a period at least two decades from the one discussed in this work. Once again we can look to more contemporary sources to check their relevancy. Brocquière (p. 183) says that the Slaves of the Porte comprised an army of about 5,000 footsoldiers and 5,000 cavalrymen. Chalkokondyles (p. 228) states that the janissaries numbered 6,000, at times up to 10,000. The discrepancy in the sources may depend on whether one counts the janissary novices as part of the total.

noblemen in the empire who had been sent to the sultan, raised at court, and trained to fight under the auspices of the sultan.[18] Mihalović writes that one of them was designated every year or two to carry the emperor's sword. According to Iacopo de Promontorio they were armed with a shield, bow, arrows, sword and a lance with a small, sharp tip and a pennant. A third of them wore a long, steel cuirass.

The next group is the Silahdar. They were between 25 and 30 years old, and their sole office was to lead a horse to the sultan while in battle, for which honor one of them was specifically designated every year or two. Each of them was mounted, but also led another horse by the hand to give to the sultan when needed. Some of the horses were bridled and saddled and others merely covered without a saddle. They were armed with bow, arrows, shield, sword, some with a cuirass, some with armor, and some without.

Next were the *Ulufeciler*. These comprised two battalions, a right and a left. According to de Promontorio, they were armed with a bow, shield, sword, arrows and lance. After the Ulufeciler and lowest in rank among the cavalry were the Ğarıp Yiğitler. The term literally means "foreign heroes," but according to Mihalović and de Promontorio these units were actually comprised of Tatars who had been freely granted to the sultan. They were the only group in the sultan's household army that was not comprised of slaves raised at court. Mihalović refers to them as "orphans." Martino Segono describes them in the classical manner as "Scythians and Persians," referring to their Tartar origins. This same author says that they were considered the Sultan's champions and were often doled out for one-on-one combat.[19] Like the Ulufeciler, they were organized into a right and left battalion. Similar to the sipahi they were armed at the expense of the sultan and given regular salaries. At the Battle of Varna, Wladislas actually engaged and defeated one of these units in an attempt to break through and unite with Hunyadi's forces.[20]

There are several other groups of cavalry mentioned by de Promontorio and/or Mihalović who had other jobs at court and in time of war comprised smaller contingents within the household army, i.e. the Kapıcılar (doorkeepers), the Ahur Hademeleri (stable hands), the Çaşnigîrler (tast-

[18] This information is also mentioned by Martino Segono (Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, p. 82). He says that the Silahdar were brought up in the same way.

[19] Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, p. 82.

[20] Pallatio, p. 466. According to Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 613), a certain Türkmen beyi İbn-i Kara was granted permission from the sultan to attack the enemy. He did so and fought the crusaders until his death. It is quite possibly he was the commander of this group.

ers) soldiers, which included the cooks, and the Çavuşlar (Pursuivants) soldiers. These contingents were provided by the respective office holders, i.e. Kapıcılar (doorkeepers), the Mirahur (master stabler and his troops), the Çaşnigîrler (tasters) and the Çavuşlar (pursuivants). This last group, the Çavuşlar soldiers, had a particularly important function in battle. It was their duty to provide a line of communication between the central command and the forces in the field. During battle they would ride back and forth relaying orders from the command's camp to subordinate units and provide feedback concerning the status of the battle and of individual units back to the central command. They also wielded clubs used to prod unwilling or fleeing soldiers back into the fight. In other respects their duties were similar to heralds in the west, providing names of those who had performed well in battle and narratives of the feats they had performed, as well as those who had acted cowardly or performed poorly. Their statements in this regard had important ramifications for the soldiers or commanders, who could expect either the sultan's beneficence or wrath. It is almost certain that their observations and reports informed the Gazavât literature that appeared after these battles had been fought.

The Imperial Slave Infantry is much easier to describe, for it was comprised almost entirely of one corps—the janissaries. The origins of the Janissary Corps (Yeniçeri Ocağı) reach as far back as 1363,[21] and by the time of Murad II they had grown into a large contingent that could weigh decisively on the outcome of a battle. As elite infantrymen, they took pride in the fact that they did not even know how to ride horses. They marched and fought on foot, save for their commander, the *agha*, who rode on horseback either behind them or in the midst of them. They protected the sultan in his quarters and on the march.

Although later on (after 1451) another division, the *sekban*, was introduced, at the time of Varna the *cemaat* was the only unit in the corps. The *cemaat* possessed up to 101 *orta*, or battalions. Every orta had its own barracks, kitchens and standard, and the corps as a whole had its own banner and music. They likewise had their own training camp (*talimhane*) where archery and sword fighting were taught. Their equipment consisted of bow, sword, shield (buckler), spear and a knife. In wartime they were issued a shovel so they could dig trenches and tunnels. In Murad's time, as gunpowder weapons were starting to appear in the Ottoman

[21] Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, pp. 510–513.

army in increasing numbers, a number of the janissaries, particularly those garrisoned in castles, were armed with arquebuses. According to de Promontorio there was also a contingent of gunners within the Janissary Corps, which de Promontorio designates in Italianized form as *zerbottaneri.*[22] They were responsible for fabricating and operating cannon. Among their group there were fifty master cannon-makers who could set up cannons in the field with the metal brought to the site by camels. All janissaries went with the sultan when he campaigned, except for a few who were left to guard the barracks. In battle, they were located in the center. Through the *çıkma* system[23] janissaries could be promoted to become a member of one of the Porte's cavalry units listed above, or even granted land or a sanjak thus remaining a slave but also becoming a member of the provincial cavalry.

It is not entirely clear what military role, if any, was played by the *Acemi Oğlanlar* (Janissary Novices). These were janissary trainees, who had finished their initial indoctrination with one of the Turkish rural families and were now being trained as fighters in Gallipoli. At the Battle of Varna, possible mention is made of these troops when the author states that the "novices" among the janissaries began to flee the battle.[24] However, it is not certain if the word "acemi" is meant in the technical sense as "recruit," or simply newer members of the corps. If the Janissary Novices are included, it would increase the total number of janissaries available to the army significantly. The number of janissaries given by Mihalović, de Promontorio and Oruç Bey are 4,000, 6,000 and 8,000 respectively.[25] Part of the discrepancy may depend on whether the author included the significant number of janissaries assigned to garrison castles or not. In 1444, Mehmet's summon of the general levy said that the kadis of every district were to dispatch the janissaries (and other troops) in

[22] Iacopo de Promontorio, 36. It must be remembered that de Promontorio's information dates from 1475. Though there must have been some sort of provision made to operate the sultan's cannon, it is unsure if in 1440 it was this group of cannoneers or not.

[23] See chapter two.

[24] Gazavât, p. 64: "yeniçerinin ve azabin acemileri bölük bölük dağılmağa başladı."

[25] Oruç Bey does not give specific numbers for Varna, but he states that 8,000 janissaries fought at the Second Battle of Kosovo in 1448. It is difficult to assume that the numbers could have changed much in the intervening years. Chalkokondyles (p. 254) states that Şehabeddin "accepted around 4,000 janissaries" from the Porte in 1442 for the invasion of Wallachia. Oruç Bey (p. 62) puts the number at 2,000. In both instances, however, it is clear that this was not the entire Janissary Corps, but only a portion.

their areas to assemble in Edirne no matter where they were stationed.[26] This might indicate that janissaries were pulled from the fortresses, or at least those not under direct threat, in order to boost numbers in the army. It may also indicate the enlistment of the novices. Though an exact number is elusive, it is reasonable to assume given the above that the number of janissaries available to the sultan in the field in 1443 and 1444 was around 6,000.

There is one other group among the Slaves of the Porte worth mentioning here that also operated as infantry: the *solaklar,* or seneschals. According to Mihalović[27] these were "sixty select boys" who walked before the sultan armed with bows. De Promontorio[28] is slightly more specific, saying that they were selected from the most capable and confident of the janissaries and that their ages were between 25 and 35 years. According to de Promontorio they functioned as a sort of bodyguard for the sultan, and it may have been one of these who was ultimately responsible for Wladislas' death and/or decapitation in 1444.

Enlisted Troops

Aside from the two main groupings mentioned above there were two other units that could be levied in time of need: the *azabs* and the *serahor*. I have placed these in a separate category since these men were not consistent and regular members of the army but recruited into service in time of need, for example when a general levy was made of all forces within the empire.[29] On two occasions[30] during the period described in this work, in 1443 and 1444, the Porte proclaimed the so-called *nefîr-i âmm*, or general levy. In both cases the Porte also declared a Greater Jihad incumbent on all Muslims due to enemy invasion of Muslim lands. Written notice was sent out to the kadis in the various cities and provincial capitals to recruit these extra forces and to organize them. An

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[26] Gazavât, pp. 43–44 (Imber's translation, p. 80).

[27] Mihalović, p. 161.

[28] Iacopo de Promontorio, p. 33.

[29] It does not seem that these troops were only used in the event of a general levy, but instead the sultan recruited azabs in particular when he simply needed to augment his troops.

[30] Gazavât, pp. 12–15. Oruç Bey, p. 66. In Oruç Bey's text it is Molla Husrev who declares the jihad.

appointed place of assembly was likewise established. It is clear in several of the texts that the forces thus assembled were paid.[31]

The azabs (an Arabic word meaning "bachelor") were light foot soldiers recruited from among the Turkish population in southeastern Rumelia and Anatolia, i.e. those areas that had already belonged to the empire prior to the fifteenth century.[32] According to de Promontorio the group was comprised of artisans and peasants, and they were armed with bows, arrows, swords, mail shirts and wooden maces. The nominal rate of recruitment was one infantryman per twenty households. An azab commander was known as a *reis*. Murad II seems to have placed great trust and bestowed favor upon these troops. Zaifi writes that they were commanded in 1444 by Ömer Kethüda and Bıçakçı.[33] These same two men, according to the Gazavât,[34] were also involved in the recruitment, organization and command of these troops in 1443. According to Mihalović up to 20,000 azabs could be recruited from both Rumelia and Anatolia. De Promontorio gives a much lower number, i.e. 6,000 per province or 12,000 total. Oruç Bey[35] writes that there were 10,000 Azabs who fought at Varna, as does Zaifi.[36] Based on these numbers one is left to assume that there were between ten and twenty thousand azabs who fought at Varna.

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[31] Brocquière (p. 185) says that each footman was paid five aspers and each horseman eight aspers (presumably per day). De Promontorio says the azabs were paid only two aspers per day from the day they arrived in camp. Mihalović writes that each member of the Serahor, or paid cavalry, was given one "gold piece" every four days, or by his own stated rate of exchange 10 aspers per day, and that each member of the azabs was given one gold piece every ten days, or four aspers per day. Murad speaks of his obligation to pay these soldiers in the Gazavât, p. 14.

[32] See İnalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," p. 128. İnalcik refers to the yaya as well as the azabs. I have seen no explicit mention of the yaya for the period here in question, and it may be that the institution was already outdated by this time. The azabs, however, are mentioned repeatedly in the sources. On the azabs see also Uzunçarşılı, Osmanlı Tarihi, p. 517. Uzunçarşılı draws mostly on his extensive research into Ottoman military institutions published in several separate books. However, his research focuses on the period after Mehmed the Conqueror, and in particular the sixteenth century and is at times not as applicable to the Ottoman army as it was in the first half of the fifteenth century.

[33] Pehlivan, p. 609.

[34] Gazavât, pp. 14, 22 (Imber's translation, pp. 54, 61).

[35] Oruç Bey, p. 66. Other, presumably later versions of the manuscript say twenty, even thirty thousand azabs. Oruç Bey (p. 71) gives the same number of azabs, ten thousand, for the second battle of Kosovo which took place four years later in 1448. At the siege of Constantinople in 1453 he writes (p. 78) that there were 20,000 azabs, ten from Rumelia and ten from Anatolia.

[36] Pehlivan, p. 609.

The next group, the serahor (also Cerehor/Çerehor), were also recruited in emergencies. Ottoman military historians often refer to these as units comprised of Christian recruits who had more of a support role (clearing roads, building bridges) than a combat role in the army.[37] This may have been true in later eras but it was clearly not the case in the 1440s. In one chapter of his book Mihalović writes that the serahor fought as mounted troops alongside the Provincial Landed Cavalry.[38] Oruç Bey says that the Kadi of Edirne, Mullah Mevlana Husrev, the same person who announced the general levy, was in charge of leading the serahor on the march to Varna during the 1444 campaign.[39] Mullah Husrev was not the most tolerant kadi in the empire,[40] and it is surprising that he should be tasked with both summoning the general levy for the sake of Greater Jihad, and then marching forth with a large contingent of Christian cavalrymen. Mihalović's more in-depth explanation of this group in a later chapter clarifies who the serahor were and what their role was:

> The Sarachori are like our mercenaries, and they are from the volunteer raiders; [41] for the emperor, when he hears that a great Christian force or any sort of large army is marching against him, orders it to be cried throughout the cities that whoever wants to earn a wage, it will be given to him. Then the above-mentioned raiders or "those who flow" ride to the emperor, and there he gives them a wage of a gold piece[42] every four days per horse; and from then on they are not called raiders, for they are not volunteers, but are called Sarachori, and they are paid by the month, for this service does not last long. Their armament is swords, shields, lances and also guns. Some also have armor. The emperor keeps them with him as long as he needs them; then, having paid them, he releases them. And there are about twenty thousand of these Sarachori.[43]

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[37] İsmail H. Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1988), p. 3, note 4. The same is found in Martino Segono (Pertusi, *Martino Segono*, p. 84) who although translating their name into Latin as "*vastatores*," i.e. "raiders," describes their duties in the same manner as Uzunçarşılı. This is not surprising, as Segono's work is based on information from several decades later.

[38] Mihalović, p. 167.

[39] Oruç Bey, p. 66: "Edirne Kadısı Mevlânâ Mola Husrev cerhorı bile alup çıkarup ve etraf-ı âlemlere nefîr-î âmmdur diyüp, ehl-i İslâm yer yer hurûc idüp..."

[40] See chapter seven which discusses his treatment of a heretical preacher in Edirne who had incorporated Christian ideas into Islam.

[41] The akinji mentioned by Mihalović in an earlier chapter.

[42] Mihalović writes that one gold piece is equal to 40 aspers.

[43] Mihalović, p. 183.

Based on Mihalović's comments the serahor were for the most part akinji raiders who answered the sultan's call to service when the empire was threatened. There was likely no requirement that these men be akinji, and none is suggested in the narrative sources describing the general levies of 1443 and 1444, but by and large the groups seem to overlap. In Mehmet's summons from 1444, however, there seems to be a stipulation that the men be from the military, or *askeri* class. This suggests that the majority would have been Muslim (their Christian counterparts being the Martolos, see below). Though those enlisted could in theory come from any military group, in practice the akinji were the largest group of experienced soldiers who owned military equipment and horses that were not otherwise bound to serve on campaign.[44] It is curious that in the narrative sources the number of serahor is in every case identical to the number of azabs. Oruç Bey and Zaifi list 10,000 azabs and 10,000 serahor, de Promontorio 12,000 of each,[45] Mihalović 20,000 of each, etc. This is likely because the number of recruited troops varied from campaign to campaign, and in Ottoman records detailing the potential strength of the army it must have been annotated in rather general terms, for it was impossible to know exactly how many azabs and serahor might be available for a given campaign until they were already enlisted and registered. The numbers were therefore rounded based on reasonable expectations. As with the azabs, one is left with a relatively wide margin and forced to assume there were between ten and twenty thousand serahor serving from 1440–44. According to de Promontorio the serahor were armed with bows, arrows, swords, shields, wooden maces and a lance. This differs from the more poorly equipped soldiers described by Brocquière and others (see below).

In contrast to raiding, for which the akinji were compensated by the plunder they seized, the serahor received a regular wage while on campaign—one gold piece per horse per fortnight according to Mihalović. In this respect it is right to call them mercenaries. However, the term might be misleading since these men did not form a mercenary company but were enlisted into service as individuals and then appointed a leader from among the sultan's men. Having said this, during the Long March

[44] Having said this, it seems that the akinji did go to war with their respective marcher lords, e.g. Turahan Bey, Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu, etc. This seems more out of a sense of obligation to their marcher lord, however, not to the sultan.

[45] Iacopo de Promontorio refers to them as merely akinji, not as Serahor. But the numbers he gives, 6,000 from both Rumelia and Anatolia to make a total of 12,000, is precisely the same as that given for the azabs.

Turahan Bey led a large group of paid akinji.[46] It is not unreasonable to assume that these were the same men who served underneath him when he led raids in the Morea and elsewhere in the Balkans. Yet Turahan Bey would not have been in a position like western mercenary leaders to negotiate with the sultan the terms of service or even a price. This was fixed by the Porte and by tradition. In the Gazavât's account of the Battle of Varna[47] it is Davud Bey, not Mullah Husrev who was given command of these troops. During the battle they performed quite well in comparison with the remainder of the Ottoman cavalry.

Mihalović[48] describes another force, similar to the Serahor but comprised of Christians—the martolos. These were Christians that belonged to the military class and were therefore exempted from paying the *jizya* tax and were allowed to hold timars. In some areas they may have served in large numbers. According to Zaifi, Christians made up half of Ferizbeyoğlu's contingent of 20,000 men.[49] These were likely *martolos*, who were especially prevalent in border areas such as Nicopolis where Ferizbeyoğlu had his sanjak. According to Mihalović, their pay while serving in the sultan's army was only one gold piece per eight days, and their armaments were similar to those of the serahor. Like the serahor, they too were paid monthly. Although their pay was only half of the serahor they were allowed to leave the campaign whenever they chose. Mihalović makes brief mention of yet one more contingent, the so-called *voynuks*. These men were paid members of the sultan's service and they "lead the emperor's horses when necessary."[50] The former janissary states in rather vague terms that there were several hundred martolos and voynuks in the Ottoman army in time of war.

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[46] Oruç Bey, pp. 63–64. According to Oruç Bey Turahan gave the akinji their salary and then told them to return to their farms. This is also reported in Giese's Anonymous Chronicle. It refers to an episode prior to the battle of Kunovitsa, described in more detail in chapter six, and was part of the general slander about Turahan Bey propagated by Halil Pasha. It is clear, however, that Turahan Bey was in charge of these akinji and that they were paid.

[47] Gazvat, p. 61. It refers to the troops he commands as those from the *nefir-i amm*, or general levy.

[48] Mihalović, p. 183.

[49] Pehlivan, p. 609. This number is almost certainly exaggerated, yet the ratio may be accurate. It is curious that Oruç Bey (p. 65) says that the army Ferizbeyoğlu used to pursue Wladislas' men during their campaign in 1444 was comprised of his troops from Nicopolis as well as the available akinji. The "akinji" referred to may very well be the martolos.

[50] Mihalović, p. 183.

Another significant source of troops that figures in Murad II's raid of 1438 and the conquest of Serbia in 1439, but not necessarily the wars of 1440–44 due to political reasons, were contributions from Christian and Muslim vassals in Ottoman client states. Brocquière writes that Branković contributed three thousand Serbs under the command of one of his sons to the sultan's army when the latter went on campaign, and indeed that a large portion of the sultan's army on certain campaigns was comprised of Christians. There were also Christian contingents from Bulgaria and Albania.[51] Ibrahim Bey, when not in rebellion against Murad II (1438–40 and 1444), was also compelled to contribute men to the sultan's army.

The above description accounts for the combatants of the Ottoman army that could and were summoned between 1438–1444. The following list is an approximate summary of the above information:

Table 4.4. Total Ottoman troops.

Provincial Landed Cavalry:	app. 30,000 cavalrymen
Slaves of the Porte:	app. 10,000 mixed troops
Levied troops:	app. 24,000 azabs and serahor
Total:	app. 64,000 troops

This number can be further reduced, since as contemporary sources report and as has been mentioned above not all of these forces could be summoned at the same time. Among the janissaries and Slaves of the Porte a few stayed behind to guard the palace and their quarters. Others were used, along with the azabs, to garrison key fortresses. Among the provincial cavalry some stayed behind to help manage estates. Certain numbers of troops were kept available to counter other possible threats from another direction. Murad himself indicated in his letter to the Cairo judges that the threat from Ibrahim Bey had kept him from mobilizing all the forces he might have had otherwise.

In addition to the combatants, there were of course a number of non-combatants which accompanied the army on campaign, among them armorers, tent-pitchers, cooks, baggage-handlers, camel drivers, etc. Regarding the baggage train, de Promontorio tells us that the Ottoman army possessed 2,500 camels, 600 mules and donkeys, 2,000 pack horses

[51] Brocquière, p. 185.

for carriages, 500 wagons and 700 pack horses for servants.[52] Mihalović writes that the army had no wagons at all, only camels, so that the army would not be unduly encumbered on campaign. His assessment seems accurate for the years 1438–1444. At that time the Ottoman army had still not adopted the tabor, and there is no mention of Ottoman wagons from Christian or Ottoman sources in these years, although there is plenty of mention of camels. Mihalović writes that the Ottomans possessed 60 treasury camels to carry the imperial treasury of 60,000 gold pieces. These camels are also mentioned by Pallatio at the Battle of Varna, who says these sacks were purposely cut open during invasion of the sultan's camp as a means to impede attackers who would be drawn to the plunder. Numerous camels were retrieved by Hunyadi's men at the defeat of Şehabeddin ın 1442. According to the former janissary there were also camels designated for carrying the tents, the field kitchen, the musical instruments and large drums for the military band. 300 other camels, as well as horses, brought a reserve of weapons that the sultan could dole out during battle to his slaves and azabs.[53] Aside from the numerous camels, which were drawn up in a circle around the sultan's camp in time of war to create a further impediment to attack, there were twelve mules designated to carry the sultan's bedding.

Mobilization

The Slaves of the Porte were constantly prepared and ready to accompany the sultan on campaign at a moment's notice. The remainder of the armed forces, which had to be culled from the far-flung portions of the empire, took much longer to prepare. Mobilization was normally announced several months in advance. This is clearly shown several times during the period in question, when these announcements tipped off the Hungarians that an invasion was coming in the spring. It was in this season that campaigns were typically begun. Criers were sent out the previous autumn to inform the men to prepare for absence and to ready their arms and equipment. In terms of the sanjak governors the beylerbey was responsible for mobilizing his men and ensuring that they arrived at the right place, at the right time and with the proper equipment. He dele-

[52] These numbers refer to pack animals and wagons for the entire army, not just the sultan's troops. Mihalović's reckoning would seem to refer only to the Slaves of the Porte.

[53] The Gazavât contains a scene in which one of the soldiers comes to the sultan to request a new sword, for his has been broken in battle.

gated this responsibility down the chain of command. In terms of the levied irregulars the sultan would send notice to the local officials, or kadis. These were essential intermediaries in the mobilization and were responsible for ensuring the necessary persons were informed, registered and sent to the place of assembly where their payment would begin.

Impromptu or emergency mobilization proved much more difficult. Şehabeddin's attempt to assemble the Ottoman forces after Mezid Bey's defeat in the spring took several months and by the autumn he only succeeded in mobilizing a portion of the available forces. During the invasions of 1443 and 1444 the Ottomans, who in 1443 at least were aware that an invasion might come, nonetheless took months to mobilize the entire army, a fact which the Hungarians consciously used to their advantage. The term "slow" is a relative one, for it is difficult to imagine another European state in the fifteenth century capable of assembling such a vast army more quickly. The fact that the Ottomans were able to mobilize approximately 60,000 troops in 1444 in just under eight weeks would have been an impressive feat even for European armies of a much later age.

Christian Forces

It is difficult to determine which adjective to pair with the armies that were raised to fight the Ottomans from 1440–1444. The most obvious choice would be "Hungarian". But this is misleading and overly simplistic. For example the garrison used to defend Belgrade, if Brocquière's comments in the early 1430s are to be believed, was comprised mostly of Germans. Hungarians weren't even allowed in the fortress. The garrison commander, John Thalloci, was ethnically Italian, geographically a Croatian and yet a loyal subject of the Hungarian king. There is much to suggest that the troops which Hunyadi used in 1442 to fight the Turks were comprised mostly of ethnic Vlachs, Szekelers and Transylvanian Saxons. One could easily use the term "Transylvanian" to describe these troops, although for the most part they, just like John Thalloci, considered themselves loyal subjects of the Hungarian king. In 1443 a sizeable percentage of the army was comprised of Serbs. In both 1443 and 1444 a large and significant contribution to the army was made by Czech mercenaries. This eclectic army was to a large degree simply a reflection of an eclectic kingdom. Yet it also belies the fact that Wladislas, whose crown was contested the length of his reign, was never able to summon the entire might of the core, ethnically Hungarian regions of the realm in the

way that Sigismund had intended in his military reforms of the late 1430s. Each large expeditionary force had to be cobbled together on its own terms and these terms were dictated by the political environment and the dominant personalities at the time.

Yet it is also misleading to see these armies as somehow representing the forces of a broader European crusade. The impetus to raise, fund[54] and lead these armies was almost entirely Hungarian. The Wallachian and Serbian contingents were more conscious of fighting under the banner of St. Ladislas, the royal banner of Hungary, than the banner of Saint George, i.e. the banner of the crusade. Although possessed of great personal ambition—what great military commander isn't—John Hunyadi fought on behalf of the realm and on behalf of his king. Indeed, one of the overlooked characteristics of Hunyadi as a military commander was his ability to forge a cohesive fighting force out of men from various backgrounds speaking different languages and employing different weapons and tactics.

Hunyadi's armies in 1441 and 1442 were comprised in large part of his own *familia*, or retinue, and the forces available to him as Voivode of Transylvania and Ban of Severin. Transylvania in particular bore much of the brunt of the Turkish offensive in 1438 and 1439, and under Hunyadi it made the greatest contributions to the campaigns from 1442–1444. Fifteenth-century Transylvania was comprised of a multi-ethnic population—Szekelers, Vlachs and Saxons.[55] In the southeast lived the Szekelers, a people of common origin with the Magyars, or Hungarians, but who had arrived in Hungary at a different time and who considered themselves distinct culturally, legally and even ethnically. "Their main duty was to perform military service whenever required."[56] When summoned to war each branch of the six Szekeler tribes, a total of twenty four, provided one-hundred light horsemen who fought in a manner typical of steppe nomads and not unlike that of the Ottoman cavalry. They were otherwise left alone to govern themselves in accordance with their ancient clan customs albeit under the auspices of the Szekeler Count (*Comes Siculorum*). In the south of Transylvania there were app. 70,000 ethnic Germans set-

[54] Branković is an important exception, for he made very significant expenditures in support of the war in 1443. The papacy contributed some money as well, though the vast majority of the papal funds in 1444 went to finance the fleet.

[55] For this section see Engel, *The Realm*, pp. 115–119 and Held, *Hunyadi*, pp. 62–63.

[56] Engel, *The Realm*, p. 115.

tled in "seven cities."[57] These were known as Saxons,[58] and the cities possessed rights as free cities whose authority was bounded only by that of the king. In time of war they were required to provide 500 equipped warriors for campaigns within the kingdom, and 100 for foreign expeditions. They were also responsible for their own urban defense. As the most important municipal and industrial centers in Transylvania, their main use lay in the production of war materiel for Hunyadi's troops.

Perhaps the most significant population (numbering about 100,000) with respect to the anti-Ottoman struggle in Transylvania at this time were the "Vlachs." The name is used here to distinguish them from the residents of Wallachia, though in reality they were ethnically, and even religiously (orthodox rite) one and the same. During the battles of 1442 in particular, but also in 1443 and 1444 they played a key role in the fight against the Ottomans. Though Hunyadi's family origins might be debated, there is no doubt that he had a personal affinity to the Vlachs. The county of Hunedoara was located in the midst of the ethnically Vlach region. It is almost certain that he knew their language, and this explains the success Hunyadi had in recruiting and utilizing these hardy soldiers, both within Transylvania and outside the kingdom's borders in Wallachia.

In the early 1430s the Hungarian Crown issued a document outlying a plan for the defense of the kingdom.[59] It divided the realm into zones to provide for defense against the most important enemies of the time. According to these *propositiones* (the document was never officially ratified and applied) the defense of Transylvania was provided for by the following:

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[57] Hence the German (Siebenbürgen) and Polish (Siedmiogród) names for the entire region of Transylvania. In Hungarian and Turkish Transylvania was known as Erdel. In Latin it is most often referred to as Transylvania, or the land "beyond the forest," which is of course the origin of the English term for the region.

[58] This term has confused some Varna historians, who seeing references to "Saxons" in Turkish and other sources assume these contingents derived from Germany. The term, in fifteenth century Ottoman sources, refers to the residents of the region described above and the contingents they provided for the army. Soldiers from Germany proper were present as well, either as mercenaries or as part of Cesarini's volunteer force, but they should not be confused with the "Saxon" troops of Transylvania.

[59] Döry, *Decreta Regni Hungariae*, pp. 405–424. See also Engel, *The Realm*, pp. 219–220.

Table 4.5. Contingents designated for the defense of Transylvania.

Origin of Contingent	Troops
Royal Banderium	1000 knights
Bishop of Transylvania	1 banderium
Voivode of Transylvania	2 banderia
Count of the Szekelers[60]	2 banderia
Voivode of Moldavia and Transalpinus (Wallachia)	10,000
Saxons, Szekelers and Noble Vlachs	4,000
Nobility of Transylvania	400
County of Bihar	600
County of Bekes	200
County of Szatmar	200
County of Szabolcs	200
County of Ugocsa	100
County of Maramaros	50
County of Bereg	100
County of Kraszna	100
County of Szolnok (Interior and Exterior)	400

The column on the left lists the various entities which were to provide for the defense of Transylvania. The column on the right is derived from a later document which referred back to Sigismund's strategy and provided[60] numbers for each contributing entity.[61] The table gives us an idea of the elements which provided for the defense of Transylvania, though they must be accepted with caution.[62] For example the royal troops were not available to Hunyadi in 1442, since the king had employed these troops to fight Elizabeth. The extent of Wallachian contributions to Hunyadi's army at the Battle of the Iron Gate is also uncertain, and references to Vlachs

[60] It may even be an actual assessment. It is unclear when the document was written, by whom, and based on what information. It is clear from the brief introduction to the document that it was written well after the reign of Sigismund, but also before 1558 when the codex it is included in was compiled. If it is indeed based on an actual survey in accordance with the *propositiones*, then the numbers next to the counties would seem to refer to the number of mounted archers each county was to provide based on the number of households.

[61] Döry, *Decreta Regni Hungariae*, pp. 424–426.

[62] The Wallachians did not consistently contribute men, and if they did so it was not to the extent of 10,000 men. Subtracting them, as well as the royal troops, and assuming an average of 1,000 men per banderium we arrive at approximately 8,500 total troops for the Transylvanian army, almost all of which were cavalrymen. Even this number is based on ideal numbers, and assumes that all those obliged to participate actually did. A more realistic assessment would suggest between six and eight thousand troops actually contributed to a given campaign. This is a very rough estimate indeed, but it gives an idea as to how many of the Transylvanian troops Hunyadi could provide for a campaign.

made by Wavrin and others also refer to "Vlachs" within Transylvania. There was, however, a sizeable contingent of Wallachian troops led by Basarab II that fought alongside Hunyadi in 1442. In 1444, Vlad Dracul of Wallachia contributed 4,000 horsemen to the crusader army under the command of his son Mircea II.

The troops contributed by the counties might also vary considerably from what is presented in the table. If Sigismund's own intent were in any way realized, these men were light cavalry horse archers. Despite all these caveats the outline of troops presented is a fair representation of the general composition of the Transylvanian Army. As the list makes evident the largest contingent consistently provided throughout these years (excepting the Wallachians) was that of the "three nations" of Saxons, Szekelers and Vlachs.[63] As mentioned previously 2,400 of these troops were Szekelers, and 100–600 were Saxons. The remaining 1,500 or so troops were Vlachs residing within the kingdom. The forces provided by these groups were overwhelmingly light cavalry, along with a smattering of medium cavalry, or in the case of the Saxons possibly even heavy cavalry. They fought in a style very similar to that of the Turks, and were armed with lance, chain and/or leather armor, and a bow. The presence of these troops in large numbers allowed Hunyadi to introduce tactics and strategy unavailable to more traditional, "western-style" forces.

The Transylvanian forces described above were the cornerstone of the large expeditions and military campaigns discussed in this work.[64] Yet they were by no means the only component. First and foremost mention should be made of the large contingents of medium and light cavalry sent by the buffer states of Serbia (1443) and Wallachia (1442, 1444). In both instances these comprised a sizeable percentage of the expeditionary force. They were used as guides and interpreters while within their native territory. Even more importantly these cavalrymen had a deep familiarity with Ottoman warfare, having fought against the sultan's troops for nearly a century. In fulfillment of their client status obligations they often participated in Ottoman campaigns themselves.

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[63] During foreign expeditions, many of these would have been grouped under the banner of the Szekeler count, as well as the banner of the voivode of Transylvania. At the battle of Varna in 1444 this was Michael Székely and John Hunyadi respectively.

[64] See for example Stephanus Katona, *Historia critica regum Hungariae stirpis Mixtae*, vol. 13 (Buda: Claudiopoli, 1805), p. 255. In a letter of praise for the accomplishments of Nicholas Ujlaki, who at that time shared the voivodeship with Hunyadi, the forces of the Voivode of Transylvania are mentioned as comprising the largest portion of the expeditionary force of 1443.

The banderia provided by the counts and magnates of Hungary which had remained loyal to King Wladislas accounted for a significant portion of the troops in 1443 and 1444. Each banner (*banderium*) was "the private army of a temporal or spiritual lord."[65] It could be comprised of an eclectic combination of troops, including a sizeable portion of armed peasants.[66] Their fighting core, however, was the heavily-armored western-style knight. Interspersed among these knights within the banderium were light mounted archers and other troop types.[67] Beheim, describing the banderia comprising the crusader forces in 1444 says that each banner contained 2,000 troops.[68] This conspicuously round number should by no means be taken literally. The truth is the numbers of men gathered under a given banner could vary wildly depending on the size of the magnate's holdings. Some of the more substantial banderia were provided by the kingdom's bishops, a fact which is most evident in 1444. The king's own royal banderia were similarly strong, as indicated by the aforementioned document from the 1430s.[69] Here we might take Beheim's own comments regarding the 2,000 men per banner quite literally. The two royal banderia at Varna (with Banfi carrying one standard and Stephen Batory the other), made up of noble retainers from Poland and Hungary as well as paid mercenaries, would thus have comprised a total of 4,000 men, mostly heavy cavalrymen and their retainers, all well-equipped and well-ar-

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65 Fügedi, Erik. Introduction to *From Hunyadi to Rakoczi*, pp. 40–41.

66 There is an abundance of evidence that peasants, particularly in Transylvania, were mobilized to fight in the fifteenth century, in particular against the Turks. See Joseph Held, "Peasants in Arms, 1437–1438 & 1456," and András Borosy, "The Militia Portalis in Hungary before 1526," in *From Hunyadi to Rakoczy*, pp. 63–102. It should be noted here that in many cases the troop quality of contingents formed as a part of the general levy of all the Hungarian nobility was very weak. Many members of the petty Hungarian nobility could not even afford a sword. However, the troops provided by magnates such as de Dominis, the Rozgony and the Thalloci, which is what is meant here when discussing the noble banderia, were effective forces of sufficiently-armored and well-equipped men.

67 The term archer (*pharetrarius*) here should not confuse the reader into thinking that these men were only equipped with a bow and mounted on a horse. They were expected to be equipped with other weapons as well, as the crown's above-mentioned *propositiones* (p. 408) states.

68 Beheim (Imber's Translation, p. 172).

69 There are several royal banderia mentioned in this document, ranging from a couple hundred men, to the 1,000 shown in Transylvania, to up to 4,000 (the reading of this number could also be 400, for it is not clear whether the number is followed by a "c" or an "m") that the crown was prepared to lead against the Hussites. The fact that two royal banderia were brought into battle, and that their numbers were augmented by Polish retainers and mercenary troops, makes the number 4,000, or 2,000 men per banner seem rather reasonable.

mored. The elite corps of this heavy cavalry unit was Wladislas' personal bodyguard of 500 knights, comprised largely of Poles.

Aside from these troops there were also, in both 1443 and 1444, an eclectic group of traditional crusaders that fought under Cesarini's banner "through the will of God, without any pay."[70] These men were a conglomeration of knights and their retainers from various nations who had answered the papacy and the cardinal's summons and taken up the cross, a vestige of earlier crusades.[71] It is not unlikely that Hans Maugest, the source of Beheim's poem, was one of these men, as well as a certain Francesco da Carrara, likely of Paduan origin.[72] Długosz makes mention of a German knight who had accompanied them on the campaign on account of his devotion to the faith, and who praised Wladislas' bravery and concern for Christendom. He had with him a sizeable entourage of retainers and servants.[73] On the whole, however, this group receives very little attention in the sources, both Christian and Ottoman, and its numbers do not seem to have been that significant. They were among the first to flee at the Battle of Varna, leaving Cardinal Cesarini stranded with only a few men.

Of enormous significance to the expeditions of 1443 and 1444 were the large infantry and cavalry contingents employing Hussite tabor tactics. The sovereigns in Hungary and Poland had made use of Bohemian mercenaries and Hussite tactics for a number of years, particularly in the Bohemian Wars between Wladislas and Albert II. Wladislas had also employed Czech mercenaries in the Hungarian Civil War. The king's greatest nemesis in the civil war, John Giskra, was himself a renowned Hussite commander. Having established a truce with Frederick III prior to the 1443 and 1444 campaigns these troops were then integrated into the crusader expeditionary army. In 1443 six hundred battle wagons were used,[74] some of which Hunyadi ordered Brașov and perhaps other Transylvanian cities to fabricate along with the necessary artillery and ordnance. If we hold that the ratio of supply wagons to battle wagons was 2:3,[75] then the total number of wagons was around 1,000. Pallatio says that

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[70] Beheim (Imber's translation, p. 172).

[71] For example Długosz (p. 284) describes Cesarini as leaving Buda in 1443, followed by "crusaders (*cruce signati*) from diverse kingdoms and nations."

[72] Dąbrowski, p. 120.

[73] Długosz, p. 286.

[74] See chapter five.

[75] Jan Durdik, *Hussitisches Heerwesen*, transl. Eberhard Wolfgramm (Berlin: Deutscher Militärverlag, 1961), p. 89. It is unclear whether the combat wagons and supply

there were around two thousand total wagons in 1444, though it is doubtful that all of these wagons were equipped to operate effectively as part of the tabor.[76]

In traditional Hussite armies 200 combat wagons could be used to house and defend six or seven thousand infantrymen and a large contingent of cavalry as well.[77] There were three times as many combat wagons in 1443, and these could have been used to house and defend almost the entire army in time of necessity. The problem facing the army wasn't finding the requisite wagons, but the personnel to man them. According to Durdik,[78] an average war wagon in the tabor had a crew of between eighteen and twenty-one infantrymen, though he admits this number could be lesser or greater depending on the circumstances. If we assume 600 wagons, this would suggest that the crusader army in 1443 had roughly 12,000 infantrymen manning the tabor. This number is far too large. Indeed, one of the biggest concerns of Cesarini and the army was finding enough infantry to man the wagons in 1443; their inability to do so threatened to scuttle the expedition.[79] For this reason they hoped to cajole Frederick III, or the Poles, into contributing the necessary infantrymen for the crusade. By the late 1430s both Austria and Poland had developed

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wagons were both used to form the tabor. Based on later diagrams by the author, however, which show no surplus wagons outside the tabor, this would seem to be the case.

[76] It is almost certain that the wagons used by particular magnates and noblemen in the banderia to transport their personal goods were not outfitted in a way that allowed them to fight as part of the tabor. Pallatio says that these wagons comprised the majority of the roughly 2,000 wagons he mentions in his work.

[77] Durdik (p. 89) writes that the average Hussite army had six or seven thousand infantrymen per 300 wagons (not including those manning the wagons), two-thirds of which were combat wagons. Therefore, the ratio would be six or seven thousand infantrymen for every 200 combat wagons. In the case of 1443, we know from Czech sources the number of combat wagons—600. This suggests that the tabor could have fit a force three times as large as the one mentioned above.

[78] Durdik, pp. 145–146.

[79] Rudolf Wolkan, ed., *Der Briefwechsel des Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini*, Part 1, vols. 1–2, Briefe aus der Laienzeit (1431–1445) (Vienna, 1909), vol. 2, nr. 37, pp. 72–73. Kaspar Schlick is writing to Cardinal Cesarini in this letter, at times mocking him concerning the preparations for the campaign. Yet it is clear from his words that the cardinal was unable to find the necessary infantry to man the wagons and this threatened the entire expedition: "Subjungitis preterea, magnificum Johannem wayvwodam, et si omnes deficiant, solum velle cum Transsilvanis aggredi Theucros illumque jam equites currusque Bohemico more instructos habere, pro quorum expeditione sexaginta (another manuscript says "quadraginta") milia florenorum exposuerit, ad quem jam iter fecissetis, nisi peditum comparandorum curam ad currus necessariorum vobis mandasset, quos non facile dicitis apud vos reperiri (non-italics added)."

native capacities to build and man tabors. It is not certain where Cesarini and Hunyadi found the requisite men in the end.[80] Yet even if one assumes drastically reduced numbers, and that the wagons were served by eight-man crews, this means there were around 5,000 infantrymen who took part in the expedition. There were at least 1,500[81] light cavalry attached to the tabor as well. Therefore approximately a quarter of the force in 1443 was directly bound to the operations of the tabor.

One of the most outstanding characteristics of Hussite warfare and tabor tactics was the use of artillery. Indeed, the development of the tabor as an effective weapon was dependent on early gunpowder weapons, and the tabor represented the first effective tactical use of mobile gunpowder artillery in history. An average wagon contained—along with several crossbowmen, halberdiers, and flailmen—two arquebusiers.[82] We know from Czech accounts of the Battle of Kunovitsa in 1443 that the Czech cavalry used arquebuses as well. A howitzer (houfnicze) was mounted on one out of five wagons, and for every 25 wagons there was a large howitzer pulled by five or six horses.[83] These larger cannon were of particular use in 1444 when the army was forced to quickly reduce a number of Ottoman fortresses. As with the wagons, Hunyadi had ordered Brașov and perhaps other cities in Transylvania to produce some of these weapons and the necessary ammunition for the campaign. Incorporation of the wagenburg into the expeditionary force was costly, both on account of the Czech mercenaries that had to be paid and the wagons, artillery and other equipment which had to be paid for and/or provided separately. It would seem that Hunyadi's attempts to begin local manufacture of the requisite war materiel was an attempt to set up a native Hungarian tabor, much as Wladislas had done in Poland and Albert in Austria.

The above description of the armies employed by the "crusaders" in field campaigns from 1440–1444 exemplifies the ad hoc nature of these

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[80] Peasant troops from the mlitia portalis is one posibility, but these would require significant training to operate the weapons and wagons necessary to deploy the tabor. Some historians suggest that the Transylvanian peasantry was already somewhat familiar with Hussite tactics.

[81] This number is given by Czech sources (Jireček, "Válečníci čestí XV. Století," *Časopis Musea Království* 18, part 2 (1859): 155–159, p. 158).

[82] I use the word arquebus to refer in general to handheld firearms from the mid-fifteenth century. In reality these weapons were quite varied.

[83] Durdik, pp. 89–90. Durdik also gives a lengthy and detailed description of the types of firearms used, rates of fire, etc. In his letter to Brașov regarding tabor armaments (see chapter six) Hunyadi asks the city to manufacture six different calibers of stone ordonnance.

armies, and that their composition was based on current exigencies and the means available. They will therefore be treated in greater detail in their particular contexts in the following chapters. In order to give the reader a reference point for the remainder of the current chapter, it is worth stating that in 1442 Hunyadi was able to field around eight to ten thousand men against Mezid Bey at the battle of the Iron Gates and eleven to fifteen thousand against Şehabeddin, the crucial difference being the number of Wallachian Vlachs. In 1443 the crusaders were able to field approximately 25,000 troops, and in 1444 around 20,000. More will be described regarding these armies and their composition in the specific descriptions of the campaigns in the chapters that follow.

Tactics

As defined in part by United States Army Field Manual 3–0 tactics are "the ordered arrangement and maneuver of units in relation to each other and/or to the enemy in order to use their full potentialities." This idea of tactics as existing in relation to forces both friendly and enemy is an essential consideration in any discussion of the tactics at work in the conflict described herein. Both armies were comprised of various units suited to different types of fighting. These units had to be integrated during a pitched battle while taking into consideration the force of the enemy, terrain and other considerations. In general the Ottoman war machine at the time of Murad II—with the important exception of the Slaves of the Porte—was poorer equipped than the allied Christian armies it faced. As Pero Tarfur stated, having observed Murad II and his army in the late 1430s: "I had the good fortune to see him (Murad II) in the field, and I observed the manner in which he went to war, and his arms, horses and accoutrements. I am of the opinion that if the Turks were to meet the armies of the West they could not overcome them, not because they are lacking in strength, but because they want many of the essentials of war." What the Ottomans lacked in materiel however they made up partly through greater numbers, outnumbering the crusader armies on many occasions by more than two to one (at Varna almost three to one). Yet one must be careful not to overemphasize Ottoman numerical superiority. An even more important factor in their success was the execution of complex strategy, tactics and the "art of war" in general.

The role of cavalry in both armies was the same as in any medieval army—break up the cohesion of the enemy's formation and reduce him to a "mob of armed men." As Bert Hall writes:

> From classical antiquity, maintaining coherent formations was the essential precondition for coordinated effort in battle, for the simple reason that no means of communication existed to carry an order farther than the voice of the officer who issued it. Any concentration of fighting men that allowed its ranks to be deformed too severely, whether as a consequence of efforts to break its lines or even of its own success in penetrating an enemy formation, ran the risk of becoming a mob of armed men. Deteriorated formations, in turn, were subject to attack by squadrons that remained intact. The tactical advantage of coherent formations was so basic to warfare that attempting to destroy coherence was often the chief goal of opposing battlefield commanders.[84]

Different types of units attempted to disrupt enemy coherence in different ways. Heavy cavalry would first maneuver into position and then charge at the enemy's ranks. The force of the heavy armor, plus heavy rider, plus heavy wooden lance were all transferred to the iron tip of that lance on contact. Yet heavy cavalry rarely smashed into a formation at full gallop. Instead, the fearsome charge itself was meant to rout the opposing force before contact was even made. Once the enemy's troops, either infantry or cavalry, had turned to flee, the heavy cavalry itself or accompanying units of light cavalry could mow down the enemy's soldiers at will.

The Ottoman army was comprised of mostly light cavalry, and quite naturally they employed tactics which played to the strengths of this unit type—speed, maneuverability and endurance. They enhanced these traits by developing a high level of unit cohesion and discipline. The Ottomans avoided a head-on clash with the often better-equipped and armored Christian knights. Instead they would use harrying tactics to draw individual knights from out of their formations while assaulting them from the flank, rear or encircling them completely. As the former janissary Konstantin Mihalović wrote:

> The Christians never [won a victory],[85] and especially in pitched battle, most of all because they let the Turks encircle them and approach from the flank. Now the Turks, seeing armored men and their formation, are ordered by the emperor to look to the horses and not the man, in such a

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[84] Bert Hall, *Weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 12.

[85] Mihalović's statement is exaggerated, as the following chapters will show.

> way that, having approached from both flanks with lances, swords, and various other weapons, they beat and wound their horses.[86] Therefore everyone must avoid burdensome armor so that he can advance head to head into battle... Whoever wishes to wage a pitched battle with the Turkish emperor must abandon all the local system and hold to the one mentioned earlier, and get the men to do that and train them in this manner. In this way, trusting in the Lord God, they could gain victory over the Turkish emperor.[87]

One means of breaking the enemy's cohesion and achieving encirclement during a pitched battle was the so-called feigned retreat. This consisted of breaking contact at the onset of the enemy's charge and drawing him into a lengthy pursuit. Then, at an opportune moment, after the enemy's lines had been drawn out in disarray, the Turks would wheel and begin to encircle their foe. Brocquière describes the employment of this tactic in a pitched battle as follows:

> If they [the Turks] find them [the Christians] formed up in battle, they ride to a distance from the opponent's lines close enough that their arrows will reach the Christian battalions, either the men or the horses. And this they do as much as is necessary by force and tenacity to put the enemy in disarray. [Then] pretending to break so that the enemy might pursue them, although they represent only a quarter of the enemy army at most, they withdraw and flee. And when one chooses to pursue them, as they are all the while fleeing, they somehow do as they were doing before (firing arrows). For they have a manner of fighting whereby in flight they fire very well from their bows and they need not be in contact with the [enemy] men or horses. And each carries a *tabolzan*[88] attached to the arc of his saddle, and once they see that those persons pursuing them are in disarray, he or those who lead them sound it [the tabolzan] three times. Each then sounds his own and they reassemble like swine at the trough, one with the other. And if they find them [the Christians] in disarray, they know well how to deal with them. And if by some chance they [the Christians] chase them in formation and all together, and they arrive at the place where the main contingent is in several regiments, they come upon them from all sides.

To effectively employ this tactic the Ottomans had to rely on the speed and endurance of their horses, as well as a startling degree of communication, command-and-control and discipline. Through the use of a signaling device, the tabolzan, they were able to overcome the great disadvantage

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[86] Johann Schiltberger, a participant in the Battle of Nicopolis in 1396, also states that the Ottomans aimed their weapons at the horses, not the riders (Schiltberger, p. 41).

[87] Mihalović, p. 173.

[88] طبل زين Literally a "saddle drum".

of retreating forces which was a break in cohesion and therefore a loss in the ability to communicate and fight as a unit. The Ottoman army, like many of its eastern counterparts, placed great emphasis on command-and-control insofar as this was possible in the age before wireless communications. Smaller drums such as the tabolzan as well as enormous camel-borne war drums were used for signaling. Command was exercised from the top down. The sultan, from a fortified position removed from the battlefield, gave orders through the çavuş, who likewise informed him of developments. Mihalović urged the armies of Christendom to adopt this system as well: "It is also necessary for the king to have with him several dozen select men and armored horses who would ride from him among the regiments, displaying themselves to the knights and urging them bravely into battle, as if the king were there himself... The cavalry should ride from them to the king and others should depart [from him] so that the king would know about everything that is happening and where—just as the Turkish emperor has his own troops with him, as was mentioned earlier."[89]

There is evidence that the Ottomans did not entirely lose communication with their troops even when they had fled the battlefield. In his battle against Hunyadi in 1442 Şehabeddin and his men, after retiring from the battlefield, waited in the wings to decide whether or not to rejoin the fight. In the end Şehabeddin declined, and fled across the river. A similar situation occurred at Varna, only with the opposite outcome. After both wings of cavalry had been put to flight many of them did not quit the battlefield entirely but instead, having been driven from the battlefield by the Christians, they rejoined the fight after the news of Wladislas' death.

In terrain that provided some means of cover and concealment the Ottomans would combine the feigned retreat with an ambush. In this case a decoy unit would encounter the enemy, and after briefly engaging with him the decoy would set off in flight with the enemy in pursuit. He would then lead the enemy to the place of ambush, where a much larger contingent of friendly Ottoman troops was waiting concealed. This tactic was used successfully by the Turks against a contingent of 500 crusaders near Tarnovo in 1444. In the *Gazavât* Ferizbeyoğlu, speaking to his brother, lays out this plan explicitly just prior to the engagement:

> 'Brother, you should go and spy on the infidels in such-and-such a place. I shall wait in ambush with my troops on this side. When the infidels see

[89] Mihalović, p. 173.

> how few of you there are and attack, you should at first engage them and flee, drawing the infidels towards me. When I enter the battle with a cry of "Allah!" you should attack the infidels from the rear, and may God grant you victory.' This is what they did. As the infidels who are as low as the dust were approaching Tirnovi Castle, beating their drums, they noticed a few Turkish soldiers standing on one side. They at once seized the opportunity to attack them, and these too joined battle, luring them into the ambush. At that moment they came to the point where the trap was laid.[90]

The result was a complete route of the crusader forces, and it was the last time the Christians divided up their force for the remainder of the campaign.[91] The successful employment of this tactic depended not only on the relative indiscipline of the crusader army in this instance, but also on able and effective reconnaissance on the part of the Ottomans. They had to reconnoiter the surrounding land sufficiently to set the ambush and scout the enemy enough to know his disposition and the strength of his forces.

Some western military units such as the feudal levy summoned by Albert II in 1439 were no match for the Turks in terms of organization, command-and-control, unit cohesion and combined operations. But this was not true of all Christian armies. The crusader forces that engaged the Ottomans in 1443 and 1444 were relatively well-disciplined and practiced the art of war on a level equal to that of their Ottoman foe. The use of Hussite tactics by a significant portion of the army is a prime example of this. The most characteristic feature of Hussite warfare was the formation of the tabor or wagenburg. This consisted of hundreds of wagons linked together in a rectangular formation to form a seamless wall. The wagons had raised boards (along with thick wooden shields known as *tarasi*) that protected the crossbowmen, arquebusiers and other infantrymen inside the wagon from enemy fire. In order to execute the various tasks and operate the several components of the tabor the men required experience and discipline. The fundamental tactic was to lure the enemy with skirmishers (cavalry or infantry) into attacking the wagenburg. The soldiers housed in the wagons could then shower the enemy with gunfire and other missile weapons, while remaining relatively invulnerable themselves. Having forced the enemy to retreat, the light cavalry housed

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[90] Gazavât (Imber's translation, p. 83)

[91] The Ottomans used this same tactic at Nicopolis in 1444, feigning retreat in order to draw the crusaders close to the walls of the fortress (see chapter seven). This is nearly identical to the Hussites' own tactics mentioned above, who attempted to lure the enemy into range of their "mobile fortress."

within the tabor could exit the fortification and mow down the dissipated, retreating force. Should the enemy rally, the light cavalry could once again retreat back to the tabor and the above-mentioned process would repeat itself. The Battle of Melshtitsa in 1443 provides an illustrative example of Hussite tactics in use against the Ottomans. It is a testament to the Ottomans and their mastery of the art of war that they did not once succumb to provocation and actually assault the tabor (though they came close on several occasions).

Once formed, the wagenburg was nearly impossible to defeat by assault. For this reason the tabor confounded Ottoman attempts to take advantage of tactical opportunities on several occasions in '43 and '44. And if imitation is the highest form of compliment, then the Ottomans' own adoption of the tabor four years later at the battle of Kosovo clearly shows their admiration for the tabor's formidable tactics and weaponry. The best solution for defeating the tabor (until such time as sufficiently powerful and efficient field cannon were developed that could blast the wooden wagons to pieces) was merely to surround it and besiege it as one would a regular fortress. This is precisely what the Ottomans did at Varna on the morning following the main battle and what they did even more effectively four years later at the Second Battle of Kosovo.

The use of Hussite weapons and tactics in 1443 and 1444 was not in any particular sense innovative. As mentioned previously Wladislas, Hunyadi and even Cesarini had experience with the tabor in combat and on campaign. Yet the majority of the Hungarian army, to include the Transylvanians, Wallachians and Serbs, do not seem to have been comfortable with tabor tactics at all, preferring instead to fight apart from the wagons. This was remarked upon by the Czech mercenaries, who noted that "the Hungarian lords did not want to fight with the wagons but in the open field."[92] It was for this reason—and for purposes of greater mobility—that Hunyadi divided the army in 1443 into an advanced force of select cavalrymen and a rear march comprised of the king's bodyguard and the tabor. The "select" cavalry force, likely composed of mostly Serbians and Transylvanians, was quite familiar with fighting against—and even in some cases alongside—the Turks. Hunyadi was able to wield, maneuver and command this light and medium cavalry force—a force more used to the "eastern" style of warfare—with great effectiveness. The troops in the tabor, less used to fighting the Turks, were protected by the wagenburg

[92] Jireček, *Válečníci čestí*, p. 158.

from harrying tactics and other methods employed by the Turks to break unit cohesion.

The tabor provided other strategic advantages as well. Durdik points out that in the Middle Ages up until the time of the Hussites winter campaigns were extremely rare. Yet Hussite commanders were able to prosecute some of their most successful campaigns during this harsh season because the tabor was comprised of such a large number of wagons, many of which were designated for provisions only. Ample provisions were necessary first and foremost for the horses. As military historian Bert Hall notes, "horses require a minimum of 25 pounds (11kg) of feed per day, half of which must be in the form of grain. These requirements have to be met through provisions, not by living off the land."[93] To a large extent these provisions could be bought, or quite commonly in the case of the crusaders simply seized, from the local populace. Hunyadi, when writing to Ujlaki on 8 November, 1443, noted that the army had not yet touched the provisions in the wagons,[94] as the local population had proven very eager to assist. Yet these provisions seem to have lasted only up until late December, whereafter the Ottoman "scorched earth" strategy made it impossible for the army to provision itself from the local countryside. The Long March showed the limits of winter campaigning, in particular when the ratio of cavalry to infantry was so high.

According to Brocquière the average Ottoman cavalryman, both man and horse, required far less food to sustain him than his Christian counterpart:

> [The Turks] are men of average size and strength and a rather comely people. They all wear great beards. As regards the common expression, "He is strong as a Turk," I have seen incomparably more Christians stronger than these for performing feats of strength. And I have found many more men who are weaker, than I have seen men who are stronger than I when it comes to doing something. They are a very diligent people and they rise early in the morning. They require little when they are in the field, and they live off of little—a little bit of poorly cooked bread, some raw meat dried in the sun, some sour milk or other and some honey or cheese or raisins or fruits and vegetables. Or from a fistful of flour they make a broth to feed six or eight of them for a day.
>
> If one of their horses or camels is a little sick from vives or some other illness it cannot fight off they quickly cut its throat and eat it. I have seen them do this several times... They have very good horses which are great

[93] Hall, p. 11.
[94] See chapter six.

> runners with endurance and they keep them very slim and they cost little and only eat at night. They give them only five or six cupped handfuls[95] of oats and twice as much chopped straw.[96]

The fact that both the Ottoman horse and the Ottoman rider required less provisions than his Christian counterpart made him better-suited to undertake long-range raids and campaigns into enemy territory. George of Hungary dedicates an entire passage to the endurance and swiftness of the Turkish cavalry and its ability to conduct long distance raids with limited supplies and startling swiftness.[97] This was of great consequence in enabling the Ottomans to outlast the Crusaders in a war of attrition such as the Long March of 1443/44.

Intelligence and Reconnaissance

The Turks were focused on and adept at gleaning every possible piece of information concerning the enemy, both for strategic and tactical planning. The fact that the sultan dispatched scouts and spies to keep himself informed about the internal affairs of Hungary is mentioned in Długosz.[98] Ottoman emissaries sent to foreign lands also assessed and reported to the Porte on the internal situation in a country and its military potential. They assumed the same was true of emissaries sent to them (it probably was). In 1440 Murad refused to release dignitaries sent by Wladislas on the assumption that they were to report on the siege of Belgrade. Those sent as Ottoman emissaries were often not of Turkish but of Balkan origin, i.e. men who understood the culture, customs and even language of

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[95] *joinctée*, or the amount that can be held in two hands when cupped together.

[96] Brocquière, pp. 216–217.

[97] *Tractatus*, p. 186: "necesse est, ut equos suos et personas proprias cum certa industria et disciplina sciant ad hoc abilitare et disponere, ita quod, etiam si contingat eos per unam totam ebdomadam die noctuque currere, nihil molestie vel ipsi vel equi eorum ex impetu illius cursus patiantur. Unde tempore, quo ipsis vacat, seipsos et equos suos sic gubernant et nutriunt, ut bene inpinguentur et fortificentur. Cum autem intendunt exire, ante septem vel octo dies sibi et equis suis cum una certa disciplina, potus, cibi scilicet restrictione et quodam moderato exercicio, apponunt diligentiam, ut corpulentia tollatur et pondus corporale et sic sagina interior in medullis remanens eos abiles et aptos ad cursum reddat."

[98] Długosz, p. 299: "Senserat Turcorum cesar exploratorum in universas Hungarie et Italie oras per eum directorum relacione ingens bellum adversus se parari et tam terrestrem exercitum quam classem maritimam magna mole et numero instructam esse. Expertus erat superiori anno Wladislai regis et sui exercitus animum, vires et felecitatem, quem multiplicatis copiis non dubitabat venturum facileque Europam omnem in potestatem suam redituram concludebat, si exercitus terrestris coniungeretur maritimo."

the Christian enemy. The frequent raids into Hungary, Wallachia, Bosnia and Serbia were also used for information-gathering. Every expedition was accompanied by local guides, and one of the explicit purposes of the akinji was to determine roads, crossing points and bridges as well as enemy weak and strong points. They never began a campaign blind.

While the enemy was on the march in the Balkans the Ottomans designated specific units to keep tabs on their movements. Ferizbeyoğlu's pursuit of Wladislas and the crusader army east across Bulgaria in 1444 was not so much to harass the well-defended army as it was to report to the Beylerbey of Rumelia and the Ottoman Porte on the crusaders' strength, morale, number and direction of travel. Both sides derived information from war captives, and Ottoman units specifically raided the enemy camp in order to capture enemy soldiers for interrogation. On the march, the main body was always preceded by an advance reconnaissance force.[99] The Ottomans' ability to accurately determine and predict enemy movements in 1443 and 1444 allowed them on both occasions to prevent the crusaders from accomplishing their goal of crossing the mountains into the plain of Edirne.

The Ottomans relied on their own developed reconnaissance and intelligence gathering as much as they relied on the enemy's inability to do the same. Surprise was key to their success, particularly when raiding. As George of Hungary writes:

> Before they depart, they divulge that they are going by a path and to a destination that they do not intend. This is in order to deceive scouts/spies (*exploratores*), should there be any. They do not go, unless they have one or two faithful guides, who know extremely well the roads and paths of the lands in which they will travel. And they travel with such speed and drive that in the space of one or three or four nights they cross such a distance that even if someone were to see them, he would not be able to prevent them from reaching their goal...[100]

George goes on to describe the inability to confront the enemy in the face of such a swift, sudden and unexpected onslaught, an experience he had undergone firsthand.[101]

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[99] Murad assigned Davud Bey and Ali Bey to this role in 1444 (Zaifi; Pehlivan, p. 609).

[100] *Tractatus*, pp. 186–188.

[101] *Tractatus*, pp. 190–192 : "Quis autem cogitare possit, quanto tremore et stupore concutiantur illi, quos sic incaute et inopinate invadunt! Certe, si ferrea vel adamantina essent corda, resoluuntur et totis viribus destituuntur. Quid enim faciet aut quo se vertere debet, qui subito et inopinate inimicum suum mortalem extracto gladio ante se conspiciat? Certe auditu non mediocriter formidabile, sed multum terribile experientia, sicut ego propriis oculis vidi."

To successfully engage the Ottomans one had to reduce their intelligence and reconnaissance advantage and ability to surprise. As much as anything else, it was Hunyadi's ability to match the Ottomans in this regard that led to his success. His developed network of scouts provided him with threat information and allowed him to achieve a tactical advantage in a number of engagements. In this respect he outstripped even his Ottoman opponents, who explained away his skill in scouting out Turkish forces by stating that he must have at one time served in the sultan's army.[102] We see Hunyadi's abilities in this regard at the Battle of Battaszek, where he used scouts to determine the enemy army's composition and location. Based on this information he was able to achieve complete surprise and successfully defeat Garai's numerically superior forces. He employed the same tactic against Ishak Bey in 1441, Mezid Bey in early 1442 and most dramatically against Şehabeddin later that same year. Hunyadi's use of scouts in 1443 foiled the attempt of Kasım Pasha and Turahan Bey to carry out precisely the sort of feigned-retreat ambush mentioned above. Having determined the enemy's location prior to the execution of their plan he marched forth to defeat the divided Ottoman forces in succession before they could even set the ambush.[103] Whenever possible Hunyadi employed local troops as scouts and reconnaissance units. In 1443, he used renegade Bulgarians who had defected to the Hungarian army as an advanced reconnaissance detachment, and in Serbia he had recourse to Branković and his cavalrymen. In Wallachia and even at Varna he took advantage of the knowledge of the local Bulgarians and Vlachs to lead him in and out of the country. In order to give himself more time to react to Ottoman raids, Hunyadi established permanent scouts and border defenses along the various pathways that led into southern Hungary, such that, as Thuróczy writes, the Ottomans

[102] The use of rear and advanced reconnaissance troops was standard operating procedure in the Hungarian army prior to Hunyadi's rise. Marczaly, reporting on the raid on Kruševac, wrote that this use of scouts was our "custom." (Acta Bosnae, p. 144: "Item feria quinta in festo beati regis Ladislai cum victoriosissimo triumpho letantes applicuimus, statim(que) exploratores nostros per vestigia nostra usque ad Palocz stare disposuimus, prout in talibus moris est.") These scouts informed the Hungarians of Ali Bey's approach and gave them the crucial time necessary to prepare their troops to wage battle. See also chapter three. The fact that Marczaly explicitly notes this practice as "our custom" in his letter suggests that perhaps it was not the custom elsewhere, or that it had not been the custom in the past. Indeed, this deployment of scout and reconnaissance forces likely resulted from lessons learned after decades of fighting the Ottomans.

[103] See chapter six.

"were not permitted to flash their spears in the gleam of the sun within the borders of the kingdom."[104]

The Ottomans' application of advanced tactics and strategy led some experienced soldiers familiar with both Christian and Ottoman warfare such as Konstantin Mihalović[105] to write that the West should discard its fighting style altogether and simply adopt that of the Ottomans. He tells his western audience they "must avoid cumbersome armor and heavy cavalry lances and also large crossbows and heavy weapons."[106] Christian armies should instead manage and organize all aspects of war, "for the Turks through such organization are far ahead." Regarding the heavily armed western knight versus his lighter-equipped Ottoman counterpart he comes down clearly in favor of the latter:

> If you pursue him, he will flee; but if he pursues you, you will not escape. And their horses, because of their great lightness are always swift; but you, even with your horses, are always slow because of the great burden of armor: for having much on your head, you are short-winded. Moreover, you cannot hear or see well. Because of the weight of the armor you cannot manage your hands or yourselves either. Rather you prepare yourself for such a war by taking much armor for yourself, as if someone wanted to attack you with a dagger, standing in one place. Thus a man must fight bravely with a stout heart, and not encumbered with armor. For it is better for a man to advance into battle and to retreat with honor, and later, being healthy, to begin what he will than to perish and remain in one place, being unable to manage himself, as if leaden.[107]

Hunyadi's successes seem to reflect this theory, and most of his victories were won with the medium and light cavalry of the Transylvanian army, along with Vlach and Serbian auxiliaries. The crusader victory at Kunovitsa was also one in which the Czech light cavalry successfully defeated an Ottoman force of even larger size. The theory that Ottomans could be better countered by light and medium cavalry would seem bolstered by the Battle of Varna.[108] The Ottomans were unsuccessful in their attempt to outflank and encircle the crusader left flank, which was com-

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[104] Thuróczy, p. 131.

[105] Mihalović had served in combat in both Ottoman and Christian armies, which makes him uniquely qualified to make such comparisons.

[106] Mihalović, p. 171. I deviate from the editor in my translation of the Czech word heweruow, which seems to me a genitive ending tacked on to the German word "gewehr," or "weapon," possibly here referring to heavy gunpowder weapons. The substitution of an "h" for a "g" is quite common in Czech.

[107] Mihalović, p. 171.

[108] See chapter seven.

posed almost entirely of the light and medium cavalry of the forces of Transylvania. On the crusader right flank, comprised of significant amounts of heavy cavalry formed up under the banderia of Wladislas' *familiares* the Ottomans were successful and routed several banderia after they succumbed to the tactics described above.

Yet the two large central banners, under the command of Hunyadi and the king, also contained a number of heavy cavalry. These performed extremely well throughout the battle. Through discipline and effective command and control they were able to avoid falling prey to the above tactic. Indeed, much of the battle that day took on a see-saw effect as the two royal banderia under the command of Hunyadi and the king attacked, pursued, and then broke off the pursuit to return to the wagons before the Ottomans could encircle them. The Turks took notice of this, and the author of the Gazavât has Hunyadi telling his men on the eve of the battle, "When the son of Osman is defeated and takes to flight, you should be careful not to pursue the Turks."[109] Even Wladislas' famous charge, which is presented by many as simply succumbing to the above-mentioned ruse, was not in fact a pursuit of fleeing cavalry but rather an attempt to break through the ranks of infantry protecting the sultan and kill Murad himself. The failure of the king's charge was due to two important factors: his misjudgment of the strength of his own men against that of the enemy and his fortified position, and the awesome coherence and discipline of the Slaves of the Porte. If infantry units did not cut and run, they usually defeated opposing cavalry for the mere fact that a regiment of infantry could pack many more armed men, and therefore many more pikes, lances, axes and swords into a common front than the opposing cavalry could. The heavy cavalry's advantage lay in its mobility and in the force of its charge. Once these were negated, i.e. once they began to actively engage the infantry, they were easily overwhelmed.

The purpose of the heavy cavalry charge was not so much to engage the enemy as to disperse him. The assumption and hope was that an infantryman faced with a charging, heavily-armored knight would simply run in fear. The janissaries' ability to withstand the heavy cavalry charge of Wladislas' men was due in large part to a unit psychology developed over many years of communal living, training, and shared experience in combat. As Hall points out regarding another body of disciplined fifteenth-century infantry, the Swiss Pikemen: "The coolness of the Swiss in

[109] Gazavât (Imber's translation, p. 95).

battle and the reluctance with which their formations gave way under attack attest to how the sense of risk was made more collective than individual. The critical attribute the Swiss possessed was at bottom intangible, a 'Spartan' state of mind that enabled them to act consistently without regard for their safety as individuals."[110] The Swiss pikemen fought as a collective unit because they trained together as a unit and even lived together in the same community. This was true to an even greater degree of the janissaries. While active members of the corps, they performed virtually all daily functions—dining, sleeping, training, equipment maintenance, etc.—as a unit. In the face of an overwhelming charge of heavily armored knights on colossal horses this sense of a collective identity kept fear from overwhelming the individual soldier. The presence of the sultan and the role of the Slaves of the Porte in protecting him was another crucial factor.[111] The sultan was their master, benefactor and sole patron. His person was essential to the collective identity of the janissaries in the fifteenth century. Their defense of him was a defense of themselves. It was for this reason that at Varna they rushed to move him from the battlefield, for to spare his life was more important for the corps than winning the battle itself.

At the Battle of Varna the (relatively) heavily armed and armored[112] crusaders successfully fought against an enemy three times superior in number and nearly won, a fact which is often overlooked by those seeking to demonstrate the absolute superiority of the late-medieval Ottoman army. The rout of the crusader banderia on their right wing early on was not so much the result of burdensome equipment as it was unfamiliarity and inexperience in fighting the Ottoman army as well as a lack of cohesion and control. When the crusaders were able to fight as a disciplined body they posed a very significant threat. The Turkish chronicles remark repeatedly that the crusaders' armor posed a real problem for Turkish weapons. At the Battle of Zlatitsa Ottoman arrows proved ineffective against the crusader cavalry and infantry, a problem which the spread of gunpowder weapons would resolve only a few years later. Both Hunyadi and Wladislas were struck by arrows at Zlatitsa but due to their heavy armor neither was significantly injured. At the siege of Petricha in 1444,

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[110] Hall, p. 37.

[111] It is interesting to compare this with Şehabeddin's defeat, when in the sultan's absence the janissaries and the rest of the Ottoman army was routed.

[112] Heavily armed relative to the Ottomans, but not necessarily to other European armies.

the Turkish garrison was forced to switch to "axes, clubs and maces" because their swords were "of no use" against the crusaders' armor.[113] Ottoman chronicles such as Oruç Bey's and the *Gazavât* repeatedly describe the crusader armies as "bristling" with weapons or "encased" in blue steel. The fact is that at this time western armor both intimidated and fascinated the Turks. This is clearly shown by the Ottoman predilection for parading around captured western knights. After the Battle of Varna they sent ten men in full plate armor to each of the prominent rulers of the Middle East, who likewise were enthralled by the spectacle. But any advantage the crusaders might gain by superior armament was useless if it were not accompanied by some measure of tactical discipline, unit cohesion and effective command and control. If applied in combination, the crusaders proved themselves more than a match for the Ottomans despite their numerical inferiority.

The Crusader Fleet

The ships comprising the crusader fleet in 1444 are often overlooked, for they ultimately failed in their mission of blocking the straits and Murad was able to cross over into Europe unscathed. Yet in order to fully understand the crusade of 1444 it is necessary to look at these ships as well. The fleet was comprised of around 20 galleys.[114] Most of these were manufactured at the Arsenal in Venice. Pero Tarfur gives us an admiring glimpse at the efficiency of the arsenal in 1438 at arming and outfitting vessels:

> There is an arsenal at Venice which is the finest in the world, as well for artillery as for things necessary for navigation. The sea flows into it, and the ships enter the water there after they pass the castles. They told me that, including the war galleys and merchant vessels, and others which were in the water and on the stocks, there were altogether eighty galleys, besides other ships. One day, coming from hearing Mass in St. Mark's, I saw about twenty men enter the square, some carrying benches and others tables and others chairs, and others large bags of money; thereupon a trumpet was blown, and the great bell, which they call the council Bell, was

[113] Gazavât, pp. 54–55 (Imber's translation, p. 90) "So the accursed Yanko gave the order for about twenty thousand (sic!) men to don their iron armour and advance. Immediately about twenty thousand infidels put on their suits of armour and attacked... The warriors of Islam realised that swords were no use against these infidels, and at once grabbed hold of axes, clubs and maces and with these continued the great fight."

[114] There may have been as many as 24 depending on how many Venetian vessels actually joined the fleet en route. See chapter seven.

> rung, and in an hour the square was full of men who received pay and went into the arsenal. And as one enters the gate there is a great street on either hand with the sea in the middle, and on one side are windows opening out of the houses of the arsenal, and the same on the other side, and out came a galley towed by a boat, and from the windows they handed out to them, from one the cordage, from another the bread, from another the arms, and from another the ballistas and mortars, and so from all sides everything which was required, and when the galley had reached the end of the street all the men required were on board, together with the complement of oars, and she was equipped from end to end. In this manner there came out ten galleys, fully armed, between the hours of three and nine. I know not how to describe what I saw there, whether in the manner of its construction or in the management of the workpeople, and I do not think there is anything finer in the world. If the Venetians desired to show their strength, the enemies of the Faith in those parts would not, in my opinion, have a single ship at sea, still less on the coast, nor would they dare to match themselves against such a powerful enemy.[115]

The speed and efficiency noted here by Tarfur make the repeated delays and hem hawing on the part of the Venetians in 1443 and 1444 all the more difficult to justify.

The vessels constructed for the Burgundians in 1444[116] (and we can assume that those built for the papacy were the same) were driven by 170 rowers each, likely on 56 banks of oars with three men to a bank. Among these were the officers, companions (*compagnions*), [117] arquebusiers and oarsmen. Each vessel had four cannons as well as a number of hand-held culverins and crossbows and 4000–5000 bolts of ammunition. They also brought along longbows, arrows, swords, lances and pole arms.[118]

A document from Dubrovnik gives the precise details of the crew for the two vessels the city contributed to the fleet in 1444:

340 rowers

90 "compagnoni"[119]

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[115] Pero Tafur, chapter XX.

[116] The exact specifications for Wavrin's flagship are presumably contained in *Ragioni antique spettanti all'arte del mare et fabriche de vasselli. Manoscritto nautico del sec. XV*, ed. Giorgetta Bonfiglio Dosio (Venise, 1987, pp. 191–195). I was unable to obtain a copy of this work.

[117] B. Krekić, *Dubrovnik* (*Raguse*) *et le Levant au Moyen Age* (Paris: Mouton, 1961), p. 337, nr. 1044.

[118] Jacques Paviot, *La politique navale des ducs de Bourgogne* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1995), p. 294. The author also includes the specifications for Geoffrey de Thoisy's vessels, but these did not take part in the fleet action in the straits.

[119] This same word (*compagnoni*) is used to describe what seem to be men-at-arms aboard the Ragusan vessels, i.e. a company of marines.

2 captains (one subordinate and one principal)
1 priest
1 barber-doctor
2 trumpeters
90 crossbowmen

It is reasonable to assume that the crew was split evenly across the two vessels, and this would give us a number of rowers equal to that of Wavrin. If we extrapolate these numbers across the entire fleet then the available marine fighting force would have consisted of 900 men-at-arms and 900 crossbowmen, or 1800 soldiers total. As mentioned, the ships were also equipped with cannon and hand-held firearms. In other words, the ships could field a significant amphibious force if necessary.

An example of this is the diembarkment of troops from one of the Burgundian galleys in 1444 at the site of ancient Troy, where they made contact with a contingent of Ottoman cavalry who made use of the feigned retreat. What is curious here is that the retreating Ottoman element was infantry, showing that such a maneuver was not relegated to the cavalry alone. As Wavrin describes the engagement:

> When everyone who had been selected was ashore, those Turks who were on foot advanced to give battle and to fire their arrows against the Christians. Ten archers, six men with hand-held culverins and a dozen or so men from the galleys drew up in order, with the command not to advance ahead of one another. However, an English bowman—a gentleman in the following of Sir Pietre Vas—tried to show off in front of the others, by abandoning his position and going on ahead of the other archers. These, in their turn, wanted to prove that they were as brave as he was and, abandoning the battle order which they had been commanded to keep, began to rush forward to catch up. The Turks saw them advancing in disarray and pretended to flee. The archers and the other companions[120] set off in pursuit, until a Turkish subashi who was on horseback beside the footmen, accompanied by sixteen to twenty horsemen, cut off the road between the Christian bowmen who were pursuing the Turkish infantry and the men guarding the pennant. Among these was the Lord of Wavrin, who had made the aforementioned Cristofle Cocq a knight. They set off swiftly to help their men. The archers and the companions from the galleys conducted themselves so well, that with the rapid and effective help that they received, they compelled the Turks, both the infantry and the cavalrymen, to take flight. Two Turks were left dead in the field, together with two companions from the Venetian galleys, armed only with shields. As

[120] "compagnons" (See above).

> was discovered later, several Turks were wounded. In addition, thirty of our own archers were wounded, and their jerkins torn by Turkish bowshot, but they captured five lances from the Turkish cavalrymen, which were neither long nor thick and had iron tips of very poor quality.[121]

The above passage is interesting not only from the perspective of fleet operations. It clearly shows the Ottomans' ability to execute complex tactical maneuvers even in small-scale engagements, and how the Christian tendency to break ranks and pursue almost led to the group's annihilation. Yet the Ottomans were not victorious. The crusaders, armed with arqebuses, crossbows and longbows as well as mail armor were able to negate with superior arms the Ottoman maneuverability and fight their way through the encirclement. Though a number of Wavrin's men were wounded and had their "jerkins" torn by Turkish arrows, their armor kept the numbers of casualties far lower than it would have been otherwise. Despite this the engagement cannot be considered a crusader victory either. Realizing they had no clear advantage the Ottomans simply retreated rather than risk further battle.

This is indicative of a difference between the two armies in their overarching attitude towards combat. It was the English bowman's attempt, as Wavrin puts it, "to show off in front of the others, by abandoning his position and going on ahead of the other archers" and his peers' eagerness to mimic his action that opened a gap in the forces which the Turks were able to exploit. Within the crusader army personal bravado in the face of the enemy was essential to one's standing as a soldier. This was true of the military leaders as well. We have referred to Wladislas' charge as a misjudgment of the adversary's strength and an over assessment of his own. But this misjudgment was in itself partly fueled by a knightly culture that praised heroic displays of virtue. Even when qualified by caveats concerning youthful recklessness, Wladislas' virtue in performing this bold charge was extolled by numerous writers after his death in a manner that made him seem heroic despite losing the battle and his life.

Hunyadi himself was not immune to this sort of behavior. According to the Gazavât[122] Hunyadi was struck by a Turkish arrow while riding up and down the lines and urging on his men. Wavrin wrote that in 1445, prior to a potential engagement with the Turks, Hunyadi personally rode out to visually survey the enemy lines along with a group of only twelve

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[121] Wavrin (Imber's translation, pp. 122–123)

[122] Imber's translation, p. 98. See also chapter six.

men to protect him. This was despite the fact that he was aware of his importance to the army's success, personally telling Wavrin, "If I were struck down the kingdom would be lost." [123] Actions such as these won the loyalty and admiration of one's compatriots and subordinates, and were considered a display of qualities becoming of a soldier and a military leader. These attitudes and considerations competed (and, in the complex scales in which military decisions were weighed, they often won out) against other considerations such as tactical discipline. Perhaps the greatest expression of this sentiment is Oleśnicki's own words to Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini in 1453, when comparing the comportment of Wladislas, who perished at the Battle of Varna, with that of Hunyadi, who fled the battlefield: "Poles learn from their parents to never flee the battle. They must either be victorious or perish."[124]

Mihalović, influenced by Ottoman perspectives, saw this sort of behavior as simply poor leadership: "The king must comport himself seriously and with God's help avoid whenever he can incidents in which he might be wounded. For a small wound and infirmity to the king is a great sorrow to the army, just as when the head is ill, the whole body is sick."[125] It was for this reason that the Ottomans kept the sultan in a fortified position away from the fight, exercising command and control through the çavuş (see above). Though Murad himself was present on most of the major campaigns, he was one of the last sultans to personally lead his army. All of this does not suggest that the Ottomans prized personal courage any less than the Christians. The sultan was eager to award soldiers who demonstrated skill and bravery in battle. In Ottoman sieges, the first soldier over the walls was granted a significant prize, often in the form of a higher office. On the eve of the battle of Varna Murad promised great rewards to those who might display courage in the coming fight. Isa Bey Hasanbeyzade at the Battle of Nish and Karaca Bey at the Battle of Varna both made heroic charges at the enemy in order to attain "martyrdom."[126] Yet in both these cases their forces had already met with disaster. I am aware of no positive example in Ottoman literature of bravado for its own sake, i.e. in flagrant disregard of tactical considerations. On the other hand any insistence that Christian armies emphasized valor over strategy whereas

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[123] Imber's translation, p. 164.

[124] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, p. 319 : "Poloni hoc ex parentibus didicerunt, ut ex bello nunquam fugiant, vincant aut moriantur, necesse est."

[125] Mihalović, p. 173.

[126] Whether these scenes in the Gazavât are literally true or not is irrelevant, the fact is that they were written as models of behavior for future soldiers to emulate.

the Ottomans prized tactics over bravery is overly simplistic. Both sides placed a premium on these things. Yet differences in degree and general tendencies in this regard are often quite visible, particularly when the two are viewed side-by-side arrayed against one another in battle.

Gunpowder

Any historian looking at the wars in question is immediately struck by the pervasive use of gunpowder weapons in this early stage of the technology's development. Equally striking is the influence gunpowder weapons had on the outcome of the various engagements discussed. In 1440 Belgrade's ample artillery inflicted great casualties on the Turkish ships on the Danube, and it was gunpowder that was used to ignite the wood-filled trenches and decimate the assaulting Ottoman troops which in effect ended the siege. Gunpowder artillery enabled the crusaders to seize half a dozen fortresses in remarkably swift time while on their march to the coast in 1444. Both crusader and Ottoman soldiers employed hand-held firearms at the Battle of Zlatitsa in 1443, and both sides used gunpowder throughout the campaign of 1444, to include the Battle of Varna. Had it not been for the coastal artillery the Ottomans emplaced on both sides of the Bosphorus to shield Murad's crossing in 1444 (see chapter 7), the fleet would likely have succeeded in its attempt to block the straits. The decisive effect this would have had on the outcome of the crusaders' campaign is self-evident.

Gunpowder weapons had been present in the Balkans beginning in the late fourteenth century and by the mid-fifteenth century their use was relatively widespread.[127] This is readily apparent in the wars described herein. All of the forces mentioned, including the Wallachians,[128] possessed gunpowder weapons even if they did not yet have native means to produce them. Firearms first spread in the fourteenth century to the west coast of the Balkan peninsula via the Italian city-states of Venice and Genoa. It was not long (1410) before Dubrovnik became a center for the

[127] For the spread of firearms in the Balkans in the late middle ages see D. Petrovic, "Fire-arms in the Balkans on the Eve of and After the Ottoman Conquests of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, ed. V.J. Parry and M.E. Yapp (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 165–194. İnalcik wrote a brief description of the early use of firearms in the Ottoman army in Halil İnalcik, "Osmanlılar'da Ateşli Silahlar," Belleten 21, nr. 81–84 (1957): 509–513.

[128] Wavrin discusses a Wallachian mortar in use at the siege of Giurgiu (Imber's translation, p. 151).

production and export of gunpowder and gunpowder weapons. Their main client was the Balkan Christian states. By the middle of the fifteenth century Dubrovnik had become the main supplier of firearms to the central Balkans.[129]

Bosnia saw some of the most concentrated use of these weapons in the mid-fifteenth century, and the fact that military operations in Bosnia were the Thalloci brothers' primary area of responsibility is no coincidence. The family seemed to be the primary middle-man for moving gunpowder from the mercantile states of the Adriatic and integrating them into the Hungarian army. Matthew Thalloci had provided the numerous cannon for the siege of Golubac in 1428,[130] and the same source specifically mentions the use of cannon by Matthew Thalloci against his Bosnian enemies at the siege of Zin in 1435.[131] In 1440 the Ragusans, wishing to remain neutral in the Hungarians' struggle with the Ottomans, agreed to ship gunpowder, cannons and "other weapons" clandestinely to Matthew Thalloci.[132] The brothers also worked to procure gunpowder from Venice. In 1442 the Venetians agreed to ship 10,000 pounds of powder requested by the Polish king for the Christian army to Srebrnica, a fortress maintained by the Thalloci, along with other powder the Thalloci had requested for themselves.[133]

Gunpowder and gunpowder weapons did not only come from the mercantile states of the Adriatic but from the north as well. The Hussite mercenaries had their own gunpowder weapons developed in Bohemia and the cities of Germany (particularly Nuremberg). By the mid-fifteenth

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[129] Petrovic, pp. 179–180.

[130] See Thálloczy, nr. 184, p. 112. It is a letter granting benefices to the Thalloci in exchange for their services to the crown.

[131] Ibid., p. 118: "Tandemque superveniente ipso Mathkone bano cum reliquo suo exercitu, necnon cum diversis ingeniis et bombardis ad expugnationem ipsius castri necessariis, idem castrum fortiter tam per ipsa ingenia, quam manualem pugnam per multos dies... expugnare."

[132] S. Ljubić, ed., *Listine o odnosajih izmedju juznoga. Slavenstva i Mletacke Republike*, vol. IX, Monumenta spectantia historiam slavorum meridionalium, vol. 21 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademia Znanosti i Umjetnosti, 1890), pp. 133–134. "Verum ut intelligat [Matthias], quod apti sumus in his, que habiliter possumus, sue magnificentie complacere, contentamur, quod emere hic et extrahere libere possit veretonos [crossbows], pulverem et alias munitiones, quas requirit. Bombardas vero, quas dicit, contentamur, quod per mare conduci facere posssit sine nostro in mari impedimento. Et rogamus, ut non per terras nostras sed per aliquem portum remotum et cum navigio forensi ad aliquem portum etiam remotum illas conduci faciat, ut videamur neutrales sicut promisimus ut est dictu."

[133] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, pp. 101–103.

century Hungary was developing its own native capacity to produce gunpowder weapons, as seen by Hunyadi's request for "rifles" from Sebeş in 1443 as well as various sizes of stones to be used as ordnance for cannons. Mehmet the Conqueror's master gunner at the siege of 1453 was a Transylvania native. Bosnia and Serbia also began to develop native production at around this time.[134]

The means by which the Ottomans acquired firearms in the fifteenth century was quite similar to that of Hungary insofar as the Italians, in particular the Genoese, played a major role. Early attempts to put in place an embargo on selling these weapons to Muslim states failed miserably, as Italian merchants could simply sell the necessary weapons and materiel to Byzantine merchants, who would in turn sell it to the Ottomans.[135] According to Wavrin it was the Genoese of Pera who supplied Murad with the guns necessary to clear the straits of the crusader vessels and provide cover fire for his crossing prior to the Battle of Varna.[136] Murad had used heavy cannon before, most notably during the siege of Constantinople in 1422 and the siege of Thessaloniki in 1430. Murad also brought along cannon during his raid into Hungary in 1438, and he had cannon cast in Smederevo in 1439.[137] We will also witness the presence of these weapons in the Ottoman army from 1440–1444. The Ottomans had access to gunpowder weapons not only in Rumelia but in Anatolia as well. The latter were supplied at least in part via the Mamelukes. This accounts for the presence of firearms in southeastern Anatolia, where Ibrahim Bey's father Mehmet was killed by cannon fire in 1423 during an assault on Antalya. Cannon and arquebus were also mentioned during the various Karaman insurrections of the 1430s and 1440s.[138]

By the mid-fifteenth century gunpowder weapons, though still relatively novel, were already in wide use by both the crusader and Ottoman forces. These weapons were not only used in siege warfare but in pitched battles as well. This was particularly true of the Hungarians, whose implementation of Hussite battle tactics led to the adoption of gunpowder weapons as an essential element of combined arms warfare. For the Ottomans, gunpowder was used in pitched battles on a limited basis. Yet the Hungarians' success during these years gave strong impetus for the

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134 Petrovic, pp. 183–185.

135 See Bartolomeo di Giano's letter in *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 158, pp. 1063 and 1066.

136 Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 128.)

137 Petrovic, p. 192.

138 See Neşri, p. 639. At the siege of Sivri-Hisar he mentions *tüfek* (arquebus or tarasbüchse) and *darbuzan* (culverin).

Ottomans to both adopt the tabor as a battle tactic and to make greater use of gunpowder weapons as a whole.

Siege Warfare

Throughout his reign Sigismund attempted to establish a system of fortifications along the southern border (excluding the border with Wallachia) meant to defend against the Ottoman Turks. The main line of this defense[139] ran from Turnu Severin westwards up until the Dalmatian coast. A secondary and considerably weaker line ran 50–60 miles behind this one. At the end of the fifteenth century there were 21 fortresses comprising this defense network. In the years just prior to Sigismund's death these fortresses were controlled almost in their entirety by the Thalloci brothers. After 1439 Hunyadi and Ujlaki took over the eastern part of this defensive line, while the Thalloci continued to control the fortresses in Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia. In 1513–14 these fortresses were garrisoned with 7,817 troops comprised mostly of light cavalry, along with some infantry and boatmen. These fortresses were royal possessions under the direct control of the monarchy. The king could dispense of them as he wished. This also meant that the crown bore the rather considerable burden of funding their upkeep and garrison. In practice, however, ambitious magnates such as Hunyadi were willing to help subsidize the defense with their own men and money to ensure their personal success and demonstrate loyalty to the king.

The east-west rivers such as the Danube, Sava and Drava as well as the fortresses along these rivers were a significant hindrance to Ottoman raiding operations. The fortresses also served as a refuge for the local population in the event of a raid. Once they had fallen into the hands of the Ottomans these fortresses became a major campaigning asset. They served as an assembly point for large raiding parties, as well as a safe place to sort out losses and gains upon the completion of a raid. They also prevented the enemy from pursuing the raiders when they crossed back over into their own territory. As Vlad Dracul remarked about the castle of Giurgiu to one of Wavrin's men:

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[139] I draw mainly on the excellent article by Ferenc Szakály, "The Hungarian-Croatian Border Defense System and its Collapse," in *From Hunyadi to Rakoczi*, pp. 141–158. His discussion, however, relates primarily to the time period of Corvinus and the early sixteenth century.

> So long as it [the castle] is in the hands of the Turks, it can harm all the Christians on the other side. Whenever the Turks want to harry Wallachia or Transylvania, they and their horses cross by this island. They go over by the castle bridge[140] on the arm of the river leading to Wallachia, and bring whatever they have captured back across the same bridge. When the Vlachs pursue them to recover their possessions, the castle prevents them from doing any damage. However, when the Turks used to go straight across the river, the Vlachs always caught up with them and attacked their rearguard, killing many of them or taking them prisoner.[141]

The most glaring example of the danger posed by crossing without a fortress or other redoubt is the defeat of Şehabeddin in 1442, whose men were cut down by Hunyadi's troops while in the process of fording the Danube.

River vessels were another important factor in operations along the Hungarian-Ottoman border, for they provided the sole means of crossing the deep-water regions of the Danube. Full-sized galleys could be brought up and down the river to conduct military operations, as demonstrated by Wavrin in 1445, when he and his modest-sized fleet enjoyed relative success along the lower Danube. Ottoman galleys equipped with cannon played a role in the siege of Belgrade in 1440, and Hungarian galleys performed an important function in the defense of Belgrade in 1456. An equal, if not more important purpose of the river flotilla was the transport of raiding parties from one bank to the other. The transport ships were housed and stockpiled at border fortresses in Ottoman possession, or on a tributary of the river out of immediate reach of enemy forces where they could be kept in relative safety. One of the most important strategic assets of Belgrade fortress was its walled port used to harbor the ships necessary to cross the Danube and Sava rivers and conduct offensive operations along the border. Because of their strategic importance these ships became a primary target for Hungarian counter-raids. Brocquière mentions 80–100 barges and galiotes in the area of Stalać in 1433, at the confluence of the two Morava rivers. These ships were used by the Turks for raiding,[142] and the fact that they were guarded by 300 soldiers and that no one was allowed to see the place belies its strategic importance. The destruction of these vessels was the primary objective for the Hungarians

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[140] Giurgiu fortress, which was razed in the 1800s, stood on an island in the Danube. The northern side of the island was connected to Wallachia over a narrow branch of the river.

[141] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 155)

[142] Brocquière, p. 207.

during their raid on Kruševac and Stalać in 1437.[143] In 1442, following his victory overs Şehabeddin, Hunyadi also raided and destroyed ships along the Danube.[144] In 1444, while passing through the Balkans the crusaders came across a number of ships hidden along a tributary and saw this as clear evidence that the Turks were planning to break the truce they had recently signed and begin conducting raids. They of course burned the vessels before departing.

Whereas Ottoman fortresses along the Hungarian border such as Golubac, Giurgiu and eventually Smederevo were similar in strategic purpose to their Hungarian counterparts, the inland fortresses of Rumelia were quite a different matter. The campaign of 1444 showed that a number of them were in disrepair. The crusaders were able to take a few of the well-garrisoned castles after only a day or two of fighting (though not without suffering significant casualties of their own). The garrison commander of Petricha (Bayezid Bey) remarked that his castle would not withstand the crusaders' cannon, and he moved his men outside of the fortress to fight and take their chances in the open.[145] The relative weakness of urban fortifications and castles deep within the empire was a result of the Ottomans' own strategic emphasis on offensive, not defensive, war. All Ottoman fortresses were under the complete control of the central authority. They were garrisoned by azabs and janissaries in the pay of the sultan, who ensured their proper armament and provisioning. As early as the 1440s this included gunpowder weapons as well. No one was allowed to enter the fortress, not even the local governor, without a "pass" from the Porte.[146] Though some of the structures were neglected, the garrisons themselves were well-equipped, and in 1444 most of the fortresses assaulted by the crusaders in Rumelia were furnished with cannon as well as handheld firearms.[147] The men of the garrison were paid a regular wage to cover their living costs. They were "not to touch the emperor's provisions unless besieged."[148]

All manner of techniques were employed to take a fortress, to include bombardment, mining, psychological warfare and the distribution of pro-

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[143] See chapter three.

[144] See chapter five.

[145] Gazavât, p. 55 (Imber's translation, p. 90).

[146] Mihalović, p. 151. Drawing on his own personal experience he describes in detail the operations of an Ottoman castle.

[147] This is mentioned not only in the Gazavât but also by Wavrin during his expedition down the Danube in 1445.

[148] Mihalović, p. 151.

paganda. Due in part to the steady advancement of gunpowder technology assaults were favored over the slower method of starving the enemy into submission. The loss of life and damage to the fortification had to be weighed against the exorbitant expense of keeping an army in the field for several months. This was particularly true of the Ottomans. As Mihalović writes: "The Turkish emperor storms and captures cities and also fortresses at great expense in order not to remain there long with the army. First having battered the city or fortress walls until it seems sufficient to him, and seeing that it is the moment to launch a general assault... he then orders it to be cried throughout the army, [then] second specifying the day of the assault. And they prefer to set the day on Friday..."[149] These assaults were preceded by much preparation, and if they failed, it usually spelled the end of the siege. The sultan and his army would often retire the following night.[150]

One particular method employed by both sides despite its cruelty was to burn out a garrison that had sought refuge in a central tower or keep. This was often done by breaching the wall with cannon, filling the hole with straw and combustibles and/or piling up wood and other flammable materials at the base of a tower. This was accomplished under cover fire provided by arquebus, bows, crossbows and other weapons. Once lit, it was hoped that the flames would climb and ignite the scaffolding or wooden machicolations both inside and outside the structure. Either the smoke or the heat would force the garrison out, often through a window, from where they would jump only to be impaled by spears and sharpened stakes driven into the ground below. This technique was used in Mühlbach in 1438 by the Ottomans and several times in 1444 by the crusaders. An attempt to use this tactic in 1445 at Giurgiu failed, as Wavrin writes, on account of the fact that the sturdy tower was round and not square.[151]

This brief description of the troops, tactics and equipment of the crusader and Ottoman forces will hopefully deepen the reader's understanding of the chapters that follow. As we shall see each campaign took place in its own context. The course of events, including the outcome, were determined as much by politics, geography, personalities and even

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[149] Mihalović, pp. 185–186. Friday, the Islamic Holy Day, was an auspicious day for Muslims.

[150] See the description of the First Siege of Belgrade in the following chapter.

[151] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 161).

weather as by the numbers and composition of the actual armies. Yet by establishing gross commonalities visible in all the campaigns it is hoped that the significant differences among them can be presented in starker relief.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RISE OF HUNYADI, 1440–1442

The 1440 Siege of Belgrade

At the end of 1439, while Wladislas and Albert were still technically in conflict with one another, Murad II sent an emissary to Krakow to better determine the Poles' disposition towards Hungary and Albert and to negotiate a possible alliance. As Długosz writes of the event:

> The Turkish emperor, Murad, sent a notable emissary with impressive gifts to Wladislas, king of Poland. First [the emissary] expressed his friendship and offered an alliance or treaty, saying that he was pleased to offer all that he had should [Wladislas] desire it. Finally, since he heard that [Wladislas] was at war with Albert King of Hungary and of the Romans he promised to support [Wladislas] with money and a hundred thousand men. Wladislas, however, addressing the emissary kindly, decided to keep him there at court until such time as he might know the outcome of the situation in the Kingdom of Hungary following Albert's death.[1]

The Ottoman emissary remained in Krakow at least until mid-march,[2] witnessing in person the arrival of the Hungarian embassy, its offer of the crown to Wladislas, and the debates surrounding this offer. The Ottoman ambassador witnessed Wladislas accept their offer of "the aforesaid kingdom for the honor of Almighty God and His Mother the Virgin Mary and all the heavenly hierarchy, for the peace and defense of the faithful and the extermination of the barbarian [Turks]."[3] Upon his return, the Turkish ambassador was obliged to report to his sultan that the ally he had been sent northward to obtain had in the space of a few months become their sworn enemy.

Yet even prior to the ambassador's return to Edirne the decision to invade Belgrade had been made. The previous year the Turks had taken Smederevo while Albert and the feudal levy sat idly nearby. Over the last 24 months Turkish raiders had been repeatedly plundering and weaken-

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[1] Długosz, p. 210.

[2] Długosz states he was present "nuncio imperatoris Turcorum presente" at the election ceremony in Krakow in March 1440. Długosz, p. 214.

[3] Ibid.

ing Transylvania and southern Hungary.[4] Belgrade was the next logical acquisition, and even if Murad thought it a well-fortified city and fortress, he was willing to engage in the enterprise. Located at the confluence of the Danube and the Sava rivers Belgrade was of enormous strategic importance to both sides. As the Ottoman historian Aşıkpaşazâde put it, "Sultan Murad, having visited Hungary, afterwards knew that this Belgrade was the doorway to the country. He wanted to undertake an expedition to open this door."[5] Belgrade, which could shelter a number of barges which could then ferry troops to various spots along Hungary's river network was an ideal base for launching raids into the western half of the kingdom, and for staging future campaigns of conquest into Bosnia and Croatia. For the same reason it posed a danger to Ottoman forces, particularly raiding parties returning from the north. At the Battle of the Sava in 1441 (see below) for example, Hunyadi was able to intercept and defeat Ishak Bey's raiders returning from the north with a force based out of Belgrade fortress.

The layout of Belgrade fortress in the mid-fifteenth century is well known to us through the reports of Bertrandon de la Brocquière. He had visited the castle in 1433 and was duly impressed. He estimated that the stronghold could house five or six thousand cavalry. He observed that the complex was actually comprised of five fortresses, or subsections, each enclosed by its own circuit of walls. Two were on the bluff overlooking the city of Belgrade, i.e. the citadel and the outlying curtain wall, and the other three sections were on the lower area below the bluff and towards the river. This latter area was the city proper, which ran along the banks of the Sava at its confluence with the Danube.

On the lower portion, a long curtain wall lined by a number of towers protected the bank. De la Brocquière also mentions a military harbor which could hold between 15 and 20 galleys. This harbor was in turn protected by two towers, between which a chain could be drawn to prevent the ingress of enemy ships. The main citadel or keep was on the upper portion of the fortress, on a bluff overlooking the city. Here was the despot's former castle and the highest and strongest point in the system of fortifications. To the landward side of the castle the elevation decreased

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[4] In the last twelve months alone Murad himself noted that he had conducted raids across the Danube five times (see chapter three).

[5] Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 134. Długosz likewise refers to Belgrade as the entryway to the kingdom : "[Belgrade] est quidam portus et primus in Hungariam introitus." Długosz, p. 248.

more gradually, eventually becoming equal with the plain surrounding the city. This was no doubt the most vulnerable side of the fortress, and was therefore protected by a double wall with numerous towers, as well as a ditch and rampart.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of de la Brocquière's description is his mention of artillery, four pieces of which he inspected personally. "I have heard it said that the fortress is very well furnished with artillery. Indeed, within the citadel I have seen four metal cannons, of which two are composed of two parts. One of these is the largest I have ever seen, and is 42 inches [sic!] in diameter where the stone enters. But in my opinion it is too short for its size."[6] Aside from this enormous mortar, the Greek historian Doukas describes in his narrative of the siege an early sort of repeating cannon.[7] Despite the presence of firearms in the Balkans and in France since the fourteenth century both chroniclers describe the weapons with a sense of novelty and perhaps tacit admiration. Aside from firearms, it seems that the castle was equipped with other types of medieval artillery, such as catapults and mangonels. These weapons were to play a decisive role in the siege.

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[6] Brocquière, p. 214. This cannon, known by its Serbian name of "Humka" had been brought to the fortress from outside Srebrnica in Bosnia in 1425 (Petrovic, p. 185).

[7] Doukas' description seems a little questionable, considering only one ball is described as leaving the arquebus. His mention of how the projectile is transformed on impact is, however, quite interesting. "[The cannon] shot lead balls as large as a Pontic walnut from a bronze apparatus whose tube held the balls in rows of five or ten. The back end of the bronze tube was filled with a powder compounded of natron, sulphur, and salicaceous charcoal. When a burning cinder or flaming spark came into contact with this powder, it suddenly ignited thereby compressing the air. The compressed air, of necessity, impels the balls, and as they are driven forward, the ball next to the powder impels the one ahead of it, and the latter impels the ball in front of it. In this way, the explosive force is transmitted to the ball located at the mouth and propels it the distance of a mile. When the ball strikes man or animal, even though they are clad in mail, the force of the shot is so overwhelming that it pierces the mail and flesh of both rider and horse without being spent or dissipated. When the ball strikes iron or any other kind of protective material, the spherical missile is compressed and transformed into a linear shape, and the ball, taking the shape of a nail, penetrates the viscera of the belly like a fiery river." Doukas, p. 178.

Before its closure in 2009 I found a diagram in the Military Museum in Koblenz of an early repeating firearm used in the fifteenth century. It was a kind of klotzbüchse. A round was placed in the chamber, and behind it a piece of wood, and behind the wood a charge. Several other rounds were packed in this manner in the barrel/chamber one after the other. There were several fuse holes in the top of the cannon, corresponding to where the charges lay in the barrel. Upon lighting, the fuse would burn down to the charge nearest the mouth of the cannon. This would ignite and propel the projectile. The fuse, still burning, would then move on to the next charge in the barrel, etc. Doukas might be describing a weapon of this sort.

Though Belgrade fortress had been constructed by Stefan Lazarević, its redoubtable condition and defensive readiness in 1440 was due to the efforts of Matthew Thalloci[8], the ban of Croatia, to whom Sigismund had entrusted the castle after its seizure in 1427. The actual commander of the fortress was Matthew's youngest brother John, also known as John Vrano on account of his position since 1438 as head of the priory of the Knights of Saint John located in Vrana. Because of their offices and their lands,[9] the Thalloci brothers had an earnest and vested interest in the defense against the Turks. This was particularly true of Belgrade. Its seizure would give the Turks easy access to Croatia and Bosnia, lands controlled by the Thalloci. Matthew had himself lived and practiced business in Belgrade for a number of years. In 1437, he had commissioned a number of craftsmen and two masters—a brick maker and a mason—from Ragusa to shore up Belgrade's fortifications.[10] He also took great care to adequately equip and outfit the fortress. As of 1433 Belgrade's garrison was comprised of foreign mercenaries, among them Germans. Brocquière wrote that Serbs were not allowed within the fortress due to the despot George's close ties to Murad II. The Hungarians, he writes disparagingly, "are so fearful and hesitant, that if the Turk arrived, they would not defend the place with all their might."[11]

As mentioned above the fortress and garrison were entrusted to John Vrano (Thalloci), a member of the Hospitaller Knights of Saint John. The chroniclers praise him unanimously,[12] and his defense of Belgrade was both an expression of the Hospitallers' proud tradition of anti-Ottoman defiance as well as a service to his family and the Hungarian king. His resourcefulness was needed, for the Turks seemed determined to take the city by force. The sultan himself led the army. It included the Soldiers of the Porte as well as the troops of Rumelia under the command of Şehabeddin. As the Ottomans drew near to the fortress John Thalloci rode bravely out to meet them.[13] After a brief skirmish, the Hospitaller realized his forces were too meager to successfully engage. He retreated back behind the walls and began to tend to the defense.

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[8] The information on the Thalloci brothers in this section is based off of Mályusz, pp. 159–165 and Thálloczy, nr. 184, pp. 111–123.

[9] Many, if not most, of the Thalloci brothers' offices were held jointly.

[10] Mályusz, p. 160.

[11] Brocquière, pp. 215–216.

[12] For descriptions of the siege see Długosz, pp. 248–250; Thuróczy, pp. 121–124; Doukas, pp. 177–178 ; Chalkokondyles, pp. 247–248.

[13] Thuróczy, p. 122.

Murad brought his men up to the walls of Belgrade, deploying his forces so as to close access from the landward side. He also ordered a number of galleys deployed along the Danube. He then set about the construction of various catapults, cannons, and other engines of war. Though the Ottomans would often cast mortar guns at the site of a siege, it seems some of the artillery for the current campaign was cast in Smederevo[14], likely with metal from the church bells melted down after the fortress' seizure in 1439. The guns and other siege weapons proved effective, and Murad's bombardments[15] "shattered the high fortifications of the towers together with the walls, razing them down to the ground."[16] The occupants were not only bombarded by artillery and arrows, but also by messages from the sultan, written in Bulgarian, which offered clemency and generosity if the city should surrender before the expected Ottoman assault.[17] Yet Vrano worked hard to keep up morale. He urged on the residents as they worked diligently throughout the night to repair the damage wrought on the fortifications by day. In order to allay the impression that they were merely penned in for the slaughter as well as to keep the Ottomans off balance John and his men very frequently "burst out of the fortress like wasps and caused a great commotion amongst the enemy."[18]

The garrison was to receive no relief. Matthew Thalloci had been captured by Elizabeth on his return from the election negotiations in Poland. Frank Thalloci, John's brother and also one of the captains of the fortress, appealed to his subjects for money so as to provide some relief, but there is no other evidence that Frank was able to raise a force in sufficient time to come to his brother's aid.[19] This is perhaps because the siege lasted only until mid-June, and not October or November as is mentioned in the

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[14] Petrovic, p. 185.

[15] Thuróczy mentions "siege machines (cannons) and other types of tormenta (catapults, etc.): "machinis et ceteris tormentorum generibus adaptatis." The word "machinis" here refers to cannons, as the same word is used by Thuróczy when he discusses the smoke of the cannons and later spiking cannons during the siege of Belgrade in 1456 (Thuróczy, p. 175–178). Długosz mentions bombards, as does Chalkokondyles.

[16] Thuróczy, p. 120.

[17] Długosz, p. 249, writes that the original messages were taken to Buda and shown to Wladislas "quae ad Wladislaum regem originaliter in Budam deferebantur." This suggests that Długosz' account is based on what he had heard and seen of the siege while resident at Wladislas' court in Buda in the summer of 1440 (see note below).

[18] Thuróczy, p. 122.

[19] His words suggest that he was lacking sufficient funds: "Cum hiis disturbiorum temporibus occurrentibus factis, etiam regalibus et regni arduis et signanter in tuitione castri Nandoralbensis per maxime expediri necessariis imminentibus, non parva copia pecuniarum indigeamus." Thálloczy, pp. 134–135, nr. 197.

chronicles. Długosz and Doukas say that the siege lasted six months. Thuróczy says seven. It is possible, however, that it lasted as little as two or three.[20]

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[20] There is a letter written from Buda which, whilst reporting other recent news from the court of Wladislas, mentions the defeat of the Turks at Belgrade (*Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, nr. 275, pp. 416–421). Though the author is unknown, as is the recipient, the letter coincides with Długosz's account of the siege insofar as it mentions a two-pronged assault by land and sea, the destruction of a ship by artillery, and the capture of a Turkish galley. However, the letter must have been written in late June, 1440, as clearly indicated by the events the letter recounts: i.e. the capture of Ulrich Cilli and the assembly of the Hungarian nobles who are to reunite under Wladislas. This ceremony took place on June 29, but in the letter it has not yet occurred, nor has Ladislaus Gara arrived yet. According to a passage in the chronicle, Gara took part in the ceremony on June 29. A letter from Wladislas dated 26 June, 1440 also mentions Cilli's capture, which Długosz says occurred on 19 June, and mentions Cilli's presentation before the king. This means the letter mentioning the assault was written sometime between 19 and 26 June, 1440, i.e. between the capture of Ulrich Cilli and his presentation before Wladislas. Theses dates are corroborated by the fact that the letter, which is reporting on important events, mentions nothing of events which took place after late June 1440. Also, the assault and end of the siege is the penultimate item mentioned among several other events. The very last thing mentioned is the presentation of Ulrich Cilli, who according to the letter "was presented before the king today in a public assembly." Thematically, this should have been written earlier in the letter, when it was mentioned that Cilli was captured and sent to Buda, but instead it was placed at the end, a strong indication that it was on that day that the letter was sent, i.e. 24 June. This date is further corroborated by the fact that the letter mentions Ladislaus Gara as absent, but expected within five days, ostensibly for the ceremony to take place on June 29. A letter from Wladislas dated June 20 (Thálloczy, nr. 198, pp. 135–137) describes an attempt to raise funds to lift the siege. This means that news of the Turkish defeat had not reached the court by the 20th. One can thus assume that the news of the Turkish defeat arrived a few days after the 20th, and was then added to the letter, much as Cilli's presentation before the king was added to the letter just prior to sending.

One might postulate a simpler solution to this dilemma, namely that there were two assaults on Belgrade, and that the letter only mentions an earlier one. This is the conclusion Bonfini came to in his *Decades*. As in much of Bonfini's work, however, he seems to have simply taken the account in Długosz and that in Thuróczy and slightly re-worked them in his chronicle. In any case, the letter above states quite explicitly that the sultan and his army abandoned the siege and left the kingdom after the failed assault (*Sic barbari illi tam notabili strage recepta ab obsidione et de regno recesserunt*). The siege therefore ended after the assault, and the assault took place around mid-June 1440. Since the Turks preferred to undertake assaults on Fridays, 17 June would seem a likely date. News of victory then arrived at the court in Buda between the 20th and the 26th of the month.

There is other evidence to support an end to the siege in the summer of 1440. Contemporaneous sources indicate the Ottomans preferred short sieges followed by a grand assault to long, drawn-out sieges (see previous chapter). Another indicator is the fact that Matthew Thalloci never attempted to come to the aid of Belgrade. This is explicable up until mid-June by the fact that he was in Elizabeth's captivity. But if the siege lasted another four months, why did he not try and assist later? As noted earlier, his brother Frank had been raising money for a relief campaign as early as mid-May 1440. Surely

All the sources describing the First Siege of Belgrade agree that it ended with a dramatic final assault. The Ottomans were dramatically and heroically repelled, and after the failed assault the Turks gave up the siege and returned home. The difference between the sources concerns the nature of the assault. According to Długosz, the Turks made a show of force by loading the galleys on the Danube with soldiers, filling in the ditch protecting the landward side of the fortress with branches and wood, and threatening an all-out assault on the city both by land and by water. The Ottomans continued to shoot scrolls of parchment into the city offering generous conditions to the inhabitants should they surrender and harsh wrath should they refuse. Trusting in their commander, the garrison held fast. Vrano himself seems to have had some experience with Turkish siege tactics. Realizing that they would begin an assault by filling the ditch with branches and sticks, he ordered the garrison to toss gunpowder[21] and all manner of combustibles into areas along the ditch, such that its presence would go unnoticed by the Turks.

The next morning the Turks began their assault, storming the castle "like locusts" and stepping onto the ditch, which they had filled with wood, as they assaulted the walls. The garrison feigned cowardice, which urged the Turks on, and the number of those assaulting the walls multiplied. Yet as the first Ottomans began scaling over the walls with ladders, the defenders changed their posture and immediately began throwing torches, firebrands, and hot coals over the walls and onto the combustible wood mixed with gunpowder below. The Turks were suffocated by the smoke and consumed by the flames. In the meantime, the ships laden with troops that were assaulting the other sides of the city were driven back by "the flash of cannons, and absorbed into the waters. Other ships were driven by the winds into the walls of the city whereupon they were

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Matthew, the head of the family, would have done his best to assist his brothers as well if the siege had lasted until October. After 20 June there are no other recorded attempts by anyone, including the king, to come to relief of the city. Finally, the description of the siege is located in Długosz's chronicle alongside the other events of the summer of 1440, and not along with the events of that fall. Is it possible, then, that the chroniclers were guilty of exaggeration when they mentioned a six- or seven-month siege, and in reality the siege lasted a little over three months, from mid-April to mid-June? The latter seems more likely to me and to better coincide with the documentary evidence. Of course, other documents, either unavailable or unknown to me, might help future historians to clarify this issue.

[21] Długosz, p. 249

captured by the defenders."[22] The sultan had suffered extremely heavy losses,[23] and finding himself unable and unwilling to continue the siege he returned home.[24]

Thuróczy's account[25] differs considerably from the above. First, he makes no mention of the ships, though these are found both in Długosz and in two separate letters originating from a member of Wladislas' court in 1440.[26] The Byzantine historian Doukas also makes mention of a large number of ships at the siege.[27] Second, Thuróczy describes at length how a mine was dug in secret by the Ottomans, employing thousands of persons and various beasts of burden, and which was meant to lead under the fortifications and into the city. As Thuróczy describes it,

> the sultan's stratagem became known to those whose chief responsibility was the safety of the fortress, either by divine command or, as certain people like to state, because an arrow, shot by someone unknown, had flown into the fortress. On this arrow, a rolled up piece of paper was found, which revealed that a channel was being dug in the spot mentioned and that it was close to the fortress. Informed as to the sultan's will in one or the other of these ways, Jovan (John of Vrano) therefore had another passage, also subterranean, speedily excavated, proceeding from the main part of the fortress in the direction of the sultan's tunnel.[28]

The map bound to the arrow is reminiscent of the propaganda pamphlets found in Długosz's narrative, and this portion of the narrative smacks of apocryphal credulity, a notion strengthened by the author's own implied

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[22] Długosz, p. 250. This passage also coincides, in principle if not in number, with the letter mentioned above (*Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, nr. 275, p. 419). The author (possibly Długosz) says that there was an attack by land and by sea, and that one galley was sunk by cannon fire, whereas another galley was seized along with the men inside it.

[23] Thuróczy mentions 17,000.

[24] Most likely the Ottomans left the next day. As Mihalović (p. 186) writes regarding a failed Ottoman assault: "The emperor, seeing that he cannot take it, orders them to retreat from the city and pull the cannon and other equipment away from the wall and to load them on wagons. And having picked up all the wounded he orders them sent ahead and himself stays at this place until nightfall, and only in the night departs from there with the whole army so that they will not cry out at them from the fortress... If, then, a certain fortress or city once defends itself against him, he will not make another attempt for a long time."

[25] Thuróczy's account was also the basis for the description of the siege given by Bonfini (Decades, pp. 427–429), whose account for this reason I do not include here.

[26] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, nr. 275, p. 419. See also Thálloczy, p. 136: "in qualiter ipsi castrum nostrum Nandoralbense tam per navalem, quam etiam per terrestrem potentiam et exercitum hostiliter obsedissent et circumvallassent."

[27] The historian gives the improbable number of one hundred. Doukas, p. 178.

[28] Thuróczy, p. 123.

hesitations. The tunnel, however, comprises the most important difference between the two accounts. Thuróczy writes that John of Vrana ordered the mine to be packed

> with saltpeter and cannon powder and other materials, and to be filled with objects capable of suddenly producing unexpected flames and thick smoke. He had the entrance leading into the tunnel skillfully and securely closed, with only a hole left open to set fire to the aforementioned materials and powders. He arranged for several guards to listen without ceasing and with exceptional attention for the enemy preparing their concealed trap. And when the enemy tunnel had reached within the walls of the fortress, up to the tunnel excavated by the fortress's inhabitants, and the noise of those digging it was heard by the guards, at once fire was brought to set alight all the explosives that had been arranged. And its fierce flames and the smoke were the cause of the sudden death of every living thing, man and beast, inside the tunnel. When the sultan himself saw that this device would not help him capture the fortress, he returned home in confusion, having lost, or so it is said, 17,000 of his people, and having devoted seven months to the siege.[29]

This account is in many ways similar to Długosz. In both stories gunpowder and combustibles are combined with other flammable materials to drive out an attacking enemy. The city's inhabitants wait until the key moment when the enemy is near and has fully committed himself, the combustibles are then lit and both flame and smoke wreak havoc on the enemy, so much so that the sultan is forced to retire from the siege. Who to believe? One possibility, of course, is that there were two assaults on the city. Yet the fact that in both accounts the sultan retires after his defeat and leaves the kingdom altogether seems to preclude this possibility. Furthermore, the striking similarities of the two versions suggest that they are in fact describing the same event. It seems more credulity should be afforded Długosz, whose chronicle is on the whole more reliable than Thuróczy. Moreover, Długosz was present in the king's entourage in Hungary in the spring and summer of 1440, at which time Thuróczy was only five years old. Thuróczy completed this portion of his chronicle dealing with these events in 1487[30], nearly fifty years after the siege. Though he had likely spoken to Hungarian veterans, these conversations may have taken place years before the chronicle was actually written.[31] On the

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[29] Ibid.

[30] See introduction to Thuróczy, p. 7.

[31] The use of an oral source is strongly suggested by the section in which he describes the map bound to an arrow, preceding this sentence with, "as certain people like to state," ("vel ut quibusdam dicere placuit." Thuróczy, *Chronica Hungarorum* (Buda:

other hand, Długosz' account of the flammable ditch is eerily similar to the account of the Turkish assault during the famous Second Siege of Belgrade in 1456.[32] Are we to expect that the Ottomans, perhaps the savviest army of the fifteenth century, fell into the same trap twice in less than 15 years? Did Długosz simply conflate the two sieges?

There is a third account of the siege written by Chalkokondyles. It shares the same general outlines as the other accounts, and even gives us the name of the man who led the assault, Ali Bey Evrenosoğlu:

> Murad arrived and besieged the city (Belgrade). Deploying cannons he destroyed a large part of the city. The army of Murad also suffered intolerably from the citizens of Belgrade, who pounded the enemy besieging the city with cannons, ballistas and other war machines. Both the men and the castle were nearly buried in arrows and other projectiles. Then Ali Evrenosoğlu, who was famous throughout the camp, came first with his men to assault the wall.[33] He made a trench across from the city and in a fortified position pitched his tents. When the wall was brought down, the attackers broke through the open places lying in ruins and seized the greater part of the city. The citizens of the city banded together, and fought together bravely against the attackers. With great effort these were repulsed, and having been cast off the walls they were driven from the city. With his hopes of capturing the city frustrated on account of the repulse of the attackers, Murad left with his armies and went home.[34]

Theobald Feber, 1488), 115v). For more on Thuróczy's use of oral tradition, see Frank Mantello's introduction to his translated and edited edition (Thuróczy, p. 17). Mantello also gives greater credence to Długosz's account of most events.

[32] Joseph Held describes the assault in 1456 as follows (Hunyadi, pp. 161–162): "[Hunyadi] directed the defense with great resourcefulness. He ordered the defenders to throw tarred wood, sulfur-saturated blankets, sides of bacon and other flammable material into the moat, which swarmed with Ottoman soldiers and set them afire. Soon a wall of flames separated the janissaries fighting in the city from their comrades outside the walls. Those caught in the moat were burned to death or seriously injured, and the janissaries inside the city were massacred."

[33] The sultan paid great attention to those who performed certain acts of bravado during a siege, which seems to be what Chalkokondyles is hinting at with Ali Bey. One such act was to be the first over the walls. As Mihalović (p. 185) writes in his memoirs: "And crying thus, they name the rewards in this fashion: to the one who carries a banner upon the wall they promise a voivodeship (beylik); and to the one who goes out after him, the rank of subassa (*subaşı*), to the the third, the rank of czeribassa (*çeribaşı*); and thus to others, money, naming the sum; and in addition, distributing various garments. And whatever is mentioned then, without fail all of this is fulfilled and carried out whether the city is taken or not taken." Ali Bey was already a "voivode," but no doubt he hoped to add to his already great prestige by being among the first to undertake the assault.

[34] Chalkokondyles, pp. 247–248

Chalkokondyles' account also bears some similarities to the story of the Second Siege of Belgrade in 1456, i.e. part of the city is taken but the attackers are repulsed by the townspeople in a dramatic melee. Yet in this regard it can be seen to support Długosz' account, or at least to complement it. In any case, it hardly seems similar to Thuróczy's.

There is very little mention of the First Siege of Belgrade by Turkish sources. This is normal, as significant defeats were downplayed in fifteenth century Ottoman historiography, in particular when the campaign was undertaken by the sultan himself.[35] The historian Aşıkpaşazâde does not even mention the siege as a defeat. The Annals of Murad,[36] equally as terse, acknowledge that Murad was unable to take the fortress but add little else. The Annals also add that Şehabeddin Pasha was present at the siege.

Though Ottoman sources are not particularly helpful, Konstantin Mihalović's description of a typical Ottoman siege in his *Memoirs of a Janissary* would seem to tilt the scales in favor of the veracity of the accounts of Długosz and Chalkokondyles:

> ...And that night and early in the morning the next day they prepare themselves for the assault, right up to evening...[37]And at night then they go toward the city from all sides silently, slowly approaching the fosse, carrying before them barricades woven of branches and also strongly-built ladders so that they can climb up and down both sides of the ladder. The janissaries then go in this fashion to the place where the wall is breached, and having approached the breached place, they wait until day begins to appear. Then first the gunners fire from all the cannon and when they have fired off the cannon, the janissaries quickly scale the wall, for at this moment the Christians are retreating before the cannon, and when they see that the janissaries are on the walls, having turned about suddenly they begin to fight bravely on both sides. And here the janissaries, urging one another on, climb up. And in addition the shot from bows comes very thick, for they continually bring and replenish their shot, and besides [there is] a great tumult from drums and human outcry. Thus the battle lasts an hour or at most two, and if the Christians overcome the heathens in that time, then little by little the heathens weaken and slack off and the

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[35] Aşıkpaşazâde (p. 134) does not even mention it as a defeat: "He gathered the army of Islam. He fell upon Belgrade. He battled against the fortress." He follows this up with a lengthy description of the raid on Transylvania in 1438 (though he gives the false year of 1439 for both events). Oruç Bey (p. 61) also makes only a brief mention of the siege, noting, however, that the sultan failed to take the city.

[36] Menage, "The Annals of Murad II," p. 577.

[37] This may explain Chalkokondyles' statement that Ali Bey set up his tents before the walls prior to his assault.

> Christians grow stronger. And so this assault lasts until noon and can last no longer, for the ammunition is used up, some men are killed, some are wounded, and some are exhausted.[38]

The passage bears an uncanny resemblance to Długosz' account. It also mentions that the Ottomans would assault only after significant breaches had been made in the walls, a fact which appears in Chalkokondyles. In any case, Mihalović provides valuable insight into Ottoman siege strategy and tactics in the mid-fifteenth century.

It has been mentioned previously that the Ottoman advance begun in 1438 was halted at Belgrade in 1440. It is true that Turkish raids into the kingdom would continue over the next few years, up until the Ottomans' crushing defeats in several battles in 1442. Yet the Siege of Belgrade was the last offensive expedition against Hungary undertaken by Murad himself, and another (likewise failed) attempt at the city was not made until well after the fall of Constantinople in 1456. After 1440, Murad seems to have given up on the idea of conquering Hungary via Belgrade, turning his attention instead to Wallachia and Transylvania, hoping to re-establish Ottoman suzerainty and then use these lands as a springboard to conquer Hungary from the east. This plan would allow him to bypass Belgrade altogether.

The victory at Belgrade was of great significance for the Hungarians as well. For the past two years the kingdom appeared defenseless and had suffered repeated humiliation from the Ottomans. This fact, combined with the raging civil war over the royal succession, suggests that an Ottoman victory in 1440 may very well have caused the collapse of the entire kingdom soon after. Though they were able to avert disaster, the Ottoman threat was still as grave as ever. Despite this many of the Hungarian nobles remained far more concerned with the civil war and its outcome than with the threat posed by the Ottomans.

The Hungarian Civil War

The Hungarian Diet was convened in Buda[39] on 29 June 1440, just after the failed Ottoman assault on Belgrade.[40] In attendance were many

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[38] Mihalović, p. 132.

[39] See chapter three.

[40] See my note above regarding the date of the Ottoman assault and the end of the First Siege of Belgrade.

prominent members of Elizabeth's party who had come to the conclusion that Wladislas would quickly gain victory in the struggle after Elizabeth's recent setbacks. The assembly set July 17th as the date of Wladislas' official coronation.[41] There was one major obstacle to these plans; Elizabeth was still in possession of the Holy Crown of Saint Stephen which her lady-in-waiting had stolen before Wladislas' arrival in Hungary. She had her son coronated with this crown back in May. The Crown of Saint Stephen was an essential symbol of the continuity and sacredness of Hungarian kingship; any coronation not involving this crown was open to accusations of invalidity. Elizabeth naturally refused to relinquish this priceless bargaining piece, and Wladislas and his followers were forced to resort to a rather awkward expedient. Two days prior to his coronation the king and his men traveled to Székesfehérvár, the burial and coronation site of Hungarian kings and the place where the royal crown was traditionally kept. There they discovered that only the crown was missing. The remaining regalia were still present and intact. To obtain the same sacred continuity symbolized by the Holy Crown Wladislas doffed his own lustrous coronation garments and put on the several-centuries-old garments and armor that had presumably been worn by the first Hungarian king, Saint Stephen. Długosz, who was himself present at the coronation, remarked on the miserable condition of the attire, but says they were preferred on account of the greater religious and traditional significance.[42] The absence of the crown was therefore to be compensated with the remaining regalia. The crown that was used in its stead was presumably the one which had been on King Stephen's head when he was buried. The ceremony was presided over by Cardinal Szecsi, who had presided over Ladislas' coronation several weeks prior. Oleśnicki was co-presider over the mass, along with a number of Polish and Hungarian bishops. After his coronation Wladislas was obliged, in accordance with tradition, to hear and pronounce judgment on two legal cases, signifying the king's status as supreme judge. Next, as Długosz writes, "He mounted his horse and made a circuit around the city coming eventually to Saint Martin's Church located outside the walls. He then mounted the church's tower and looking down on the people he extended with his hand an unsheathed sword into the four parts of the world: east, west, north and south, signifying that he desires and is obligated to defend the parts of Hungary from all

[41] Długosz, p. 239.
[42] Długosz, p. 242.

unjust invasion."[43] Wladislas now considered himself to be the official sovereign of Hungary, and many other magnates and noblemen shared this opinion. Yet Elizabeth and her backers were far from yielding what they considered to be the rightful patrimony of her infant son. Ongoing conflict was inevitable.

The Hungarian Civil War began in earnest after Wladislas' coronation and lasted throughout the entirety of his reign. Its most intense period was between the summer of 1440 and the summer of 1442, during which time nearly all the king's attention was focused on disposing of his rival and securing his throne. His supporters in both Poland and Hungary provided the money and military support required for this endeavor. The intensity and duration of the fighting was such that by the time of the first offensive expedition against the Turks in 1443 the Poles were fed up with squandering blood for their southern neighbor, preferring to remain at home.[44] Indeed, virtually the only person zealous about defeating the Turks in the early 1440s was John Hunyadi. Just as the French Revolution enabled the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, so the Hungarian Civil War, combined with the ever-present Turkish threat, enabled the talented Transylvanian to elevate himself in a few short years from being a moderately-ranked *novus homo* to becoming the most important figure in the kingdom. After winning his first dramatic victory against Wladislas' rivals at Battaszek the grateful king bestowed on him the Voivodeship of Transylvania. Hunyadi used this office to raise his own funds and his own army which he employed with startling success in the ensuing years. The Hungarian Civil War had another important consequence, for it allowed the German king Frederick III[45] to meddle in the affairs of Hungary. The Habsburg ruler worked diligently and with some success to foil Wladislas' plans and limit his successes, whether against Elizabeth or the Turks. The Habsburgs did their best to ensure ongoing strife within the kingdom, even after Elizabeth's death, despite the entreaties of the papacy and most of Christendom.

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[43] Ibid.

[44] This was not the only reason the Poles generally abstained from these expeditions, see chapters six and seven.

[45] I refer to him here as Frederick III for the sake of simplicity, although his official coronation as emperor did not take place until later (19 March, 1452). As Archduke of Austria he was Frederick V (official coronation 23 November, 1457), and as King of Germany Frederick IV (official coronation, 17 June, 1442). From 1440 onward, however, he was the de facto head of the Habsburg dynasty.

By the summer of 1440 Wladislas had the upper hand. Most of the Hungarian magnates as well as the middle and lower nobility were on his side. He had recourse to the military and monetary resources of Poland. It seemed that it was only a matter of time before he either defeated or otherwise neutralized his rival. The initial armed encounters between the two parties bore this out. On June 19th, Elizabeth's cousin and most zealous supporter, Ulrich of Cilli,[46] was captured by Wladislas' men while fleeing from the besieged castle of Győr.[47] His capture was significant, since most saw Ulrich as the primary instigator and enabler of Elizabeth's rebellion. Despite his role Wladislas showed him great mercy and clemency, "never allowing him to be placed in irons and ordering him to be treated with all respect."[48]

Faced with dwindling resources and the capture of her most significant supporter Elizabeth was forced to swallow her pride and seek the assistance of Frederick of Habsburg.[49] Frederick and Wladislas were cousins. Both had been elected to a new kingdom in 1440—Wladislas as King of Hungary and Frederick as "King of the Romans."[50] Here the similarities ended. Frederick seemed everything that Wladislas was not. Whereas the young Polish king was bold, idealistic, generous and gracious to a fault, Frederick was perceived as cold, manipulative, calculating and even cowardly.[51] Despite repeated entreaties not only from the pope but from others in Christendom, he never undertook a major crusade. He did much to try and sabotage Wladislas' own expeditions against the Turks. Yet his caution paid dividends in the end. Whereas Wladislas died after having ruled in Hungary only four years, Frederick lived for

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[46] Dąbrowski (pp. 26–27) notes that Ulrich, who was a powerful baron in his own right, entertained the notion that he would be able to exercise real control in Hungary via Elizabeth, his cousin. The Cillis had built a significant territory for themselves out of Habsburg lands between the Drava and Sava rivers as well as certain parts of Hungary in an area roughly corresponding to modern day Slovenia. They also controlled Zagreb.

[47] For this episode see Długosz, pp. 232–234.

[48] Ibid., p. 234.

[49] See Baczkowski, "Stosunek," p. 16.

[50] That is King of the Germans. As mentioned above his coronation did not take place until 1442, although his election had already occurred.

[51] Take, for example, the impression of the Castilian traveler Pero Tafur (Tafur, p. 222): "I departed from there and came to the confines of Hungary, and entered Germany, and came to a city called Neustadt, which signifies New Town, and there I found the present Emperor Frederick, then Duke of Austria, a first cousin of the Emperor Albert, but not so noble a man... This Duke, now Emperor, is exceedingly wealthy, but they say that he knows well how to keep what he has."

another 43 years and set the Habsburgs on the path to dominance in Central Europe.

Though king of Germany, Frederick was forced to share Austria with his brothers. Archduke Albert VI also known as Albert the Prodigal was Frederick's main rival in the duchy. Although Frederick's attempts to unite Austria militarily were unsuccessful, he made up for his failures in battle with masterful diplomacy. This was in large part due to the chancellery which had been run for many decades by Kaspar Schlick.[52] Throughout his life Schlick had faithfully and effectively served three German kings, beginning with Sigismund in 1416, then Albert II from 1437 and finally Frederick from 1440. "His versatile character and singularly good nature[53] enabled him to ably abide with equal favor so many emperors, who were quite varied in their characters."[54] Despite their personal differences the above-mentioned emperors had in common a ruthless rivalry with the Jagiellonian dynasty in Poland, a rivalry which Chancellor Schlick deftly managed. He navigated his ship of state through such turbulent waters as the Council of Basel, the Hussite crusades, Albert II's succession, the Bohemian Wars with Poland, the various Imperial Diets, and most importantly for our subject, the early years of Frederick's reign. Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, the great humanist scholar and future Pope Pius II, served in Schlick's chancellery beginning in 1442. He quickly became an admirer, writing that he and his colleagues would turn to Schlick for advice when difficult issues arose.[55] He once wrote to a friend: "You yourself know well how much Kaspar Schlick is able to accomplish in the service of the king; if he is with you, you need not fear anyone else."[56] Given Piccolomini's own prodigious intellect and abilities this is a significant compliment.

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[52] The main source for Schlick's life is an article in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, pp. 505–507.

[53] This positive perception of Schlick's character was also shared by Pero Tafur (Tafur, pp. 210–212), who traveled for a while with Schlick and stayed at his residence in Eger.

[54] "Versatile profecto ingenium et nature bonitas singularis, que inter tot imperatores, moribus prorsus dispares, pari gratia vivere potuit." From Piccolomini's description of Kaspar Schlick in his *Historia Bohemica*, pp. 234–236.

[55] Ibid., "Si quid profecimus, quod scimus quam tenue est, adiumento suo consecuti sumus."

[56] „Du weißt selbst am besten, wie viel beim Könige der ansehnliche Kaspar Schlick vermag; ist der mit Euch, so braucht Ihr Niemand Anderen zu fürchten," From Aeneas Silvius' letter to Peter de Noxeto, Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, under the headword Kaspar Schlick, p. 407.

Elizabeth's decision to appeal to Frederick III for help must have been difficult for the proud queen. Her relationship with him was cool, partly because she had refused to enact Albert II's will, but also because she had signed an agreement of mutual assistance with Frederick's rival Albert VI in June of 1440.[57] Her choice to work with Albert VI was on account of Ulrich, who at the time was supporting Albert VI against Frederick.[58] This led to military conflict between Ulrich and Frederick which was ongoing at the time of Wladislas' election. In early 1440 Wladislas himself appealed to Frederick to cease attacking Elizabeth's cousin. The irony here is significant, for these two would soon reconcile and become first Wladislas' and then Hunyadi's bitterest rivals. The stage for this realignment was set during negotiations in Hainburg throughout the month of August 1440. These culminated in an agreement[59] on August 23. It involved first a reconciliation between Albert VI and Frederick. This in turn allowed Frederick to enter into a truce with Ulrich. With her cousin and ally now at peace, the path was laid for Frederick to fully support Elizabeth in her bid for the Hungarian crown. This complex plan was not doubt engineered by Schlick, who saw that all the parties would otherwise fight each other to exhaustion while the Jagiellonians strengthened their hold in Central Europe.

Frederick did not offer his support for free. Elizabeth was obliged not only to openly acknowledge Frederick's regency over her son but to physically hand him over as collateral along with her sister and the stolen Holy Crown of Saint Stephen. In exchange she received 5,000 Guldens[60] and the promise of his future support, both fiscal and diplomatic. Clearly, the main victor in the negotiations was Frederick III, who had possession of both the Holy Crown and Albert II's successor, all in exchange for flimsy promises of money and diplomatic support. Yet this agreement also created a change in the balance of power in Hungary. Elizabeth was able to use Frederick's money to pay for the experienced and well-led mercenary armies of John Giskra. This Hussite commander would prove an indomitable adversary in Slovakia, drawing away the resources of Wladislas' staunchest supporters, the Rozgony family, whose power was based in northern Hungary. Despite various attempts to dislodge him over the

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[57] Baczkowski, "Stosunek," p. 19.

[58] Dąbrowski, p. 28. Ulrich also possessed lands in the Steiermark, which were contested by Frederick.

[59] Baczkowski, "Stosunek," pp. 17–19.

[60] Earlier in the negotiations on August 3rd she had received a loan of 2,500 florints.

next several years, Giskra continued to hold much of Slovakia even after Elizabeth's death in the name of protecting the rights of her son Ladislas, the "legitimate heir" to the kingdom.

Even more importantly, the agreement in Hainburg ensured a proxy war between Frederick III and his cousin Wladislas. Frederick did not necessarily want Elizabeth to win this war. Indeed, should she emerge victorious, it would be nearly impossible to refuse the return of her son Ladislas and the Holy Crown to the Hungarians. Ladislas himself, as the heir to Albert II, might even become a rival to Frederick in Austria and the Holy Roman Empire. Should Wladislas win, Frederick could refuse to hand over the boy through his position as regent, and then use Ladislas to constantly threaten Wladislas' position in Hungary. The boy and the Holy Crown were the greatest trump cards in what Schlick viewed as a long-term diplomatic game. The best policy was to ensure that this game continued with no clear winner until such time as these trump cards could be played with greatest effect.

After Wladislas' coronation there was no turning back. There were now two "legitimately" crowned Hungarian kings. Elizabeth's party, their confidence and pockets replenished by Frederick III, met with some military success in the latter half of the year. Ladislas Garai succeeded in taking some fortresses in the southwestern counties. Garai's successes were more painful to the king politically and emotionally than militarily, for the king had chosen to release Garai from captivity in Buda that summer only to have him take up arms once again. At that time Garai had ostensibly come to court, along with other noblemen previously affiliated with Elizabeth, to profess his loyalty to the king. Yet when the truth about the stolen crown was discovered the Hungarian nobles had him thrown in prison on account of his alleged complicity in the event.[61] Wladislas, however, argued for clemency.[62] Garai was released, much to the dismay of the Hungarians who perhaps knew better than the king that he would immediately return to Elizabeth and restate his loyalty to her.

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[61] Garai was responsible for the fortress in which the stolen crown was kept. According to Kottanerin, Garai was in fact angry at Elizabeth for the manner in which she had stolen the crown and does not seem to have been aware of her plans. For his motivations in joining Elizabeth's side, as well as his campaign in 1440, see Dąbrowski, p. 52.

[62] Długosz (p. 239) describes this episode in detail and does not miss the opportunity to make some deprecating remarks regarding Garai's loyalty.

With no other forces available to fight Garai, Wladislas was forced to call John Hunyadi and Nicholas Ujlaki[63] away from their defense against the Turks on the southern border. As loyal *familiares* they brought their own forces, supplemented by the Polish and Hungarian troops the king still had at his disposal. They marched rapidly westward to meet Garai's forces heading north. In mid-November[64] they came into contact with the enemy.[65] The armies were more or less evenly matched, [66] yet Hunyadi succeeded in surprising the enemy and overwhelming them with a sudden assault:

> Against them with troops arrayed and banners flying came the aforementioned lord Janos Hunyadi, the voivode,[67] and Miklos (Nicholas) Ujlaki, then ban of Macva, who rushed headlong upon their camp, determined to fight bravely against them. Loud war cries therefore resounded repeatedly on each side, and likewise drums and trumpets re-echoed from both parties. But because King Wladislas' partisans fought with greater fervor, the encampment of the other side was at once thrown into confusion, disbanded and dispersed.[68]

Hunyadi himself seems to have set the example during the assault fighting bravely alongside his men.[69] The encounter was brief, lasting "only a few hours" as Długosz wrote. Several of the queen's more important supporters were captured or killed, and Garai himself was forced to flee almost alone. He later resigned from playing a part in the civil war which had cost him not only his army but his honor as well. Henceforth Wladislas encountered no concerted opposition from this region of Hungary.[70]

The defeat at Battaszek was significant more for what it helped avoid than what it actually accomplished. Wladislas, low on troops and funds, could have put up only minimal resistance to Elizabeth's growing army

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[63] Ujlaki, who was one of the wealthiest barons in the kingdom, had served in these years as Hunyadi's patron. This relationship began to change as Hunyadi's own status increased dramatically in the coming years.

[64] For this date see Dąbrowski, p. 52, note 2.

[65] For descriptions of this battle see Dąbrowski, p. 53; Długosz, pp. 256–257 and Thuróczy, pp. 115–116.

[66] Długosz, p. 258. "Exercitus regius Ladislai bani exercitu esset non inferior."

[67] In fact Hunyadi was only made voivode after the battle.

[68] Thuróczy, p. 115.

[69] Imre Nagy, *Codex Diplomaticus Patrius*, 8 vols (Györ/Buda, 1865–1891), vol. IV, pp. 331–332: "ubi et in propria persona ipse Johannes Wayuoda rememoranda opera strenua, sue virtutis audacia, peregisse dicitur."

[70] This was due as much to Garai's defeat as to the successive Turkish raids on the region between the Sava and the Drava taking place at this time.

had it been able to gather more troops and head northeast towards the capital. "Had Hunyadi been unsuccessful it would have no doubt spelled the end of Wladislas' reign in Hungary."[71] As it was, Elizabeth found herself once again at a disadvantage. As before, she turned to Frederick III and hocked some of her Austrian territories in exchange for a large loan of 11,000 Hungarian Florints.[72] She used the funds to raise yet another mercenary army.

While Garai was fighting in the southwest Giskra and his forces won a number of victories in the north, encroaching on the territories of the Rozgony, and capturing several of the towns in the Zips region. Most importantly Garai's men cut off communications with Southern Poland. This put Wladislas in a rather dire position, for he was depending on Poland to provide fiscal and military support. The noblemen of Małopolska had in fact met in August and early September to discuss this issue. They decided to enact a special tax, to raise an army and come to the aid of their king.[73] In the winter of 1440 these troops succeeded in breaking Giskra's blockade and by early January they had arrived at the king's side.[74] Wladislas used his reinforcements and other troops on hand to besiege Esztergom fortress.[75] The siege ended rather quickly and Dionysius Szecsi, whose brother was defending the fortress, negotiated terms.

In March of 1441 fortunes shifted back and forth as an army raised by the Cillis defeated a large force led by Wladislas' supporters—the Banffi family. Wladislas moved his forces southwest to confront the threat. His army succeeded in taking a few fortresses in the region whereupon the Cillis, perhaps intimidated by the king's operations in and around their lands, reached an agreement with Wladislas by mid-April. In exchange for active support of the pro-Wladislas party, to include military assistance as well as arbitration between the king and Elizabeth, Ulrich was released and Wladislas agreed to recognize the Cilli's possessions in Hungary and to return what he had taken by force. This agreement demonstrates the lack of will manifest in the queen's camp by the late spring of 1441. Her attempts to conduct offensives, necessary for her to achieve victory, had grounded in defeat. Though Giskra was still successful in the north, due in large part to the support of the Slovakian towns and cities,

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71 Dąbrowski, p. 54.
72 Paid out in two payments, the first 9,000 and the second 2,000.
73 Długosz, p. 251; Dąbrowski, pp. 55–56.
74 Dąbrowski, pp. 55–56; Długosz, pp. 259–260.
75 Dabrowski, p. 56; Długosz, p. 262; Thuróczy, pp. 116–118.

he was unable and/or unwilling to operate outside the region. In order to achieve complete victory Wladislas would have to march north and remove Giskra by force. With the exception of Giskra's area of operations Wladislas was more or less in control of the remainder of the kingdom. Though the opposition was still able to stave off defeat, by late spring 1441 it seemed to have little hope of victory. At this point Wladislas entered into negotiations with the queen which dragged on until autumn.

The situation in Hungary was the cause of a good deal of anxiety for Frederick III. According to Długosz: "Having heard of [Wladislas'] successes Frederick, King of the Romans, feared greatly for himself and the land of Austria lest [Wladislas] invade his lands and kingdom in order to take back the Crown of Hungary which had been entrusted to him (Frederick) by Queen Elizabeth."[76] Długosz goes on to say that Frederick even considered handing the crown back. Frederick's fears were based on the fact that the Hungarians had already assembled an impressive army to battle the queen. Should Wladislas achieve victory, his next step would likely be to use that army against Frederick III to force the return of the Holy Crown and Elizabeth's son. The Hungarians themselves were incensed that the symbols of Hungarian sovereignty had been handed over to a foreign ruler, and would have almost certainly backed the invasion. Frederick III's fears in this regard are important, for they would surface again in 1443 and 1444 when Wladislas had at his disposal the large armies he had raised not only to fight Elizabeth but also to fight the Turks.

The Rise of Hunyadi

Though his attention was occupied by the civil war, Wladislas had not forgotten that his reason for coming to Hungary was first and foremost to combat the Turks. Soon after his coronation he began searching for possible allies in this undertaking. Yet if Wladislas had plans to undertake an expedition in late 1440 or early 1441 he was quickly dissuaded by Garai's own offensive in southwestern Hungary. This not only ruled out any hope of an anti-Ottoman crusade, but it forced the king to pull men designated for border defense against the Ottomans. In the end, this risky decision proved fortunate. Hunyadi's victory at Battaszek showed that the Transylvanian was not only a skilled commander but a loyal *familiaris*, answering the king's summons with alacrity and zeal. His decisive action

[76] Długosz, p. 262.

resulted in the defeat of a rival army at a time when there was no alternative to victory. Hunyadi of course knew that such service would entail rewards. In February of 1441 he was given the Voivodeship of Transylvania.[77] It was an excellent choice, and one must wonder if Hunyadi himself hadn't requested it. Not only were his family possessions in Transylvania, but the voivodeship itself was the most significant territorial post in the kingdom. It had also been the object of repeated Turkish invasions and incursions since Ottoman aggression began in earnest in 1438. Hunyadi knew the voivodeship would give him both the means and the opportunity to prove himself fighting the Turks at a time when no one else in the kingdom seemed willing to do so. In short, it would be his ticket to greatness. As Długosz wrote: "Henceforth John Hunyadi, previously hardly at all known, sought to make a name for himself. He was a man of obscure birth but of soaring spirit and desirous of great things. From obscurity and penury Wladislas King of Hungary and Poland made him a great man."[78]

Wladislas quickly saw the advantages of Hunyadi's appointment. With his military skill and the support of his wife's extensive family Hunyadi was able to quickly clear Transylvania of Elizabeth's supporters and win the province over for the king.[79] More importantly, Hunyadi proved quite capable of defending against the Turks. For this reason Wladislas gave him (in partnership with Ujlaki) control of almost the entire southern border defense. Along with his previous position as Ban of Severin and his recent appointment to Voivode of Transylvania, the king also appointed Hunyadi Captain of Belgrade. It was in this area in particular, i.e. in southwestern Hungary, that the Ottomans focused their raiding in 1440 and 1441 after the unsuccessful siege of the city.[80] As Thuróczy wrote:

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[77] The precise date in which Hunyadi obtained the voivodeship was 20 February, 1441. See Korczak's note (Długosz, p. 413). Długosz makes it quite clear that Hunyadi was granted Transylvania on account of his victory at Battaszek. Ujlaki, as Długosz mentions, was also granted the title (7 March, 1441) but never resided there, and left Hunyadi to organize and govern the territory on his own.

[78] Długosz, p. 258.

[79] Held, *Hunyadi*, p. 85.

[80] Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 134. See also Dąbrowski, p. 41, footnote 2 in which he mentions a document from 4 August, 1440 (Hungarian National Archives, M. O. D. L. 13574). The document announces that a court case is to be prorogued on account of the need to wage war "contra insultus sevissimorum Turcorum nec non Bohemorum et Theutonicorum regni nostri Hungarie predicti emulorum." The reference to Bohemians and Germans refers to the mercenary armies employed by Elizabeth.

> The southern regions of the Kingdom of Hungary as far as the Tisza river, and the whole of Slavonia and all the territory situated between the rivers Sava and Drava were being savagely plundered by the Turks; cities and villages and towns were being consumed by fierce fires, and possessions were being looted; people without distinction of sex and age were either being killed or led away to be sold forever into slavery; and so great was the disaster that all the inhabitants of the kingdom were overwhelmed with deep hatred, and those regions of the kingdom of which we have spoken were deserted.[81]

Hunyadi had successfully waged a number of smaller and indecisive engagements against the Turks as Ban of Severin and Captain of Belgrade in 1440 and 1441.[82] Only one of these, no doubt the most significant, is described by the extant sources and is generally referred to as the Battle of the Sava.[83]

Hunyadi had been in Belgrade in the summer of 1441 perhaps overseeing the reconstruction of the fortress which had been heavily damaged by the siege the previous year. Through his scouts, he would have been able to observe Turkish movements in Northern Serbia and learned that Ishak Bey Evrenosoğlu, who had been granted Smederevo and northern Serbia as a new marcher territory for conducting raids into Hungary, had recently set out on a raid into the north. Hunyadi adopted a new tactic.

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[81] Thuróczy, p. 125. Thuróczy's words echo those in a letter from 1453 summing up Hunyadi's achievements, including his battle against Ishak Bey in 1441. As context, the letter (Fejer, 180–194) states: "Et foris grassante dictorum Teucrorum tyrannide, innumeris affligeretur malis, utpote cum iam ipsi sine discretione sexus et aetatis vel trucidare, vel abducere, impune consueverant, et pene totas inferioris ipsius regni nostri Hungariae partes usque ad fluvium Ticie et item ex altera usque ad interiora loca regni nostri Sclavoniae vel miserabiliter vastaverunt vel occupaverunt, adeoque gravissimo metu iam totum regnum concusserant, ut illud in pendenti ferme ruina positum miseram sub blasphemorum Christi manibus olam restare putaret occupationem."

The severity of the destruction is also borne out by a letter from Wladislas wherein he accepts refugees from these raids into his protection (Thálloczy, nr. 200, p. 137).

[82] That a number of minor engagements took place is mentioned by Thuróczy: "After many inconclusive clashes with the Turks in which he always ended up the victor..."; and also by the king's letter granting Hunyadi additional lands cited below.

[83] As sources for this battle there is its brief mention in the above letter found in Fejer (pp. 180–194). There is another letter from Wladislas awarding Hunyadi with even more lands dated October 8th, 1441 (Nagy, nr. 242) in which the king recounts the Battle of the Sava along with the Battle of Battaszek as Hunyadi's most outstanding victories since the beginning of his reign. Interestingly Bonfini (pp. 429–430), whose work is usually more or less a compilation of other earlier chronicles, contains a unique and rather detailed description of the battle, suggesting that he had another source at hand, perhaps the letters announcing the victory which Bonfini mentions at the end of his account. Of course, it may be a fiction similar to Bonfini's narrative of Şehabeddin's defeat.

Rather than move to encounter the raiders, he instead gathered up forces in Belgrade and proceeded into Ottoman-controlled Serbia. For three days he raided and plundered, soon after heading back towards Belgrade. Ishak Bey, apprised of Hunyadi's movements, set out to face this affront. Hunyadi, expecting the famed marcher lord to appear, kept himself informed of enemy movements just as the Hungarians had during the raid of 1437. By the time the Turks arrived his soldiers were already prepared for battle. After some fierce fighting, Ishak Bey's men began to break and the marcher lord himself resorted to desperate flight. Hunyadi pursued Ishak Bey and his men all the way to the gates of Smederevo, killing and capturing as many of the enemy as possible along the way. His victory, although modest, was still welcome news to a country beset by problems. Hunyadi sent letters to the king announcing his victory. Wladislas and members of his court were overjoyed and ordered prayers of thanks to be said on behalf of the victory. The king personally thanked Hunyadi and encouraged him to continue in his efforts, not neglecting of course to back his thanks with more grants of land and benefices.[84] Hunyadi, after the king himself, had now become the most powerful nobleman in Hungary.

Hunyadi's victories in Serbia and against Elizabeth were important for several reasons. Aside from the significant role they played in securing Wladislas' own rule, they brought Hunyadi himself to the forefront of Hungarian politics. Confident in his abilities as a commander he knew that warfare was the simplest means to advance his career. His victories brought him not only the favor of the king, but they were profitable in and of themselves. Thuróczy mentions at the battle of Battaszek that Hunyadi and Ujlaki "enriched themselves by plundering the enemy, both camp and troops."[85] Hunyadi's raid into Turkish territory in 1441, aside from throwing the Turks off balance, also proved lucrative on account of the plunder his army seized.[86] In short, wars were expensive, particularly defensive wars, in which the opportunities for plunder and booty were limited. Hunyadi needed money to build and maintain his army to provide for this defense and to wage successful campaigns. He needed successful campaigns to earn more benefices and plunder which would in

[84] See the letter from 8 October mentioned above.

[85] Thuróczy, p. 116.

[86] Ibid., p. 126: "At length they returned to the fortress of [Belgrade] with a victory and a great abundance of captured loot." Bonfini, p. 430: "Impedimaenta, et multa hinc relata sunt spolia. Corvinus tandem insigni victoria potitus, cum ingenti praeda et captivorum numero, Albam rediit."

turn enable him to raise even more powerful armies. As Hunyadi began to build his reputation as a commander other capable soldiers strove to join his retinue in the hopes of advancing and enriching themselves as well. In short, military success engendered more and even greater military success, and Hunyadi would carry the momentum he had built in 1441 into the following year, earning more glory and victories both for the crown and for himself.

Hungarian Civil War—Phase Two

The proposed negotiations between Wladislas and Elizabeth had gone nowhere by the summer of 1441. Wladislas decided to return to arms to resolve the issue, this time by launching a campaign in the north to deal with Giskra. He gave command of the expedition to John Čapek who, like Giskra had once been a Hussite commander but was now a hired mercenary. Čapek besieged the city of Kosice in July.[87] On the verge of success the Hungarians who accompanied him began to desert and he was forced to lift the siege. Giskra took advantage of the situation to conduct his own offensive operations. In short, by the autumn of 1441 nothing had been accomplished save to demonstrate that Wladislas' armies were seemingly incapable of defeating their enemies in the north. This only encouraged the rebels and gave Elizabeth and her party the benefit of hope.

By the autumn of 1441 Wladislas seemed exasperated by the never-ending civil war. As both a newly-elected king and a foreigner he was heavily reliant on the good will, loyalty and mutual interest of his supporters in order to establish his reign. His own finances were depleted, and he had limited options as to where he might turn for help. An eloquent testimony to this is the king's letter to his Polish subjects from the end of the year pleading for assistance against his enemies.[88] He begins by reminding them that it was *they* who convinced him with their words and their tears to accept the Hungarian crown, and that they had offered their property and lives at the time to support the enterprise. For he and they had hoped "that the fame of Poland would increase when we turned our sword... against the savage Turks."[89] But things turned out different than expected, and on account of the continuing civil war "we are not

[87] Długosz, pp. 264–265. Dąbrowski, pp. 66–67.
[88] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. I, pp. 127–129.
[89] Ibid.

able to resist the Turks, who lacerate the kingdom daily with cruel slaughter and delight in shedding the blood of Christ's faithful. Those spared the cruel sword, young and old, are led away into exile. The cries of defiled women and virgins and the wails and groans of nearly all the people in those lands... resound in our ears daily." The circumstances of the civil war, he writes, have forced him to draw troops from those regions most threatened by the Turks, and he mentions a specific instance in which Ujlaki, forced by necessity, had set out against the Turks but had to be recalled to fight elsewhere; thus leaving the region in great danger.[90] His frustration, however, extended to his own supposed adherents as well. There are only a few who support him, he complains, the rest are mercenary troops he must pay for with his own funds. The frustration expressed in the letter was compounded by the fact that the king really had no other options. If he yielded to Elizabeth he would not only face humiliation and the shame of failure,[91] he would return to a Polish kingdom filled with unresolved problems, short on finances, surrounded by hostile enemies and thus in a far worse situation than before he had accepted the Hungarian crown.

In the letter Wladislas reveals more than just desperation and disappointment. He also shows that despite the civil war he still saw his mission in Hungary as combatting the Turks. In order to accomplish this mission he needed troops, and the Poles were not as forthcoming as before. They had their own problems to deal with. As early as October, Wladislas tried to entice assistance from the Duke of Mazowsze by offering him the possession of whatever lands he might seize in combat.[92] Yet the duke was unable to assist. He was involved in his own local feud with the Lithuanians, a conflict which he hoped the king himself might resolve should he at last leave Hungary and return to Poland. At the end of 1441 the few reinforcements that did arrive were not funded by Poland. The men expected to be pensioned and compensated personally by the king.

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[90] The King was forced to pull Ujlaki away from the southern border to take up a campaign in the west of the country to relieve Bratislava fortress, which was at the time under siege from Elizabeth (see below).

[91] He expresses this himself in the letter (*Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. I, p.128): He tries to appeal to the Poles' sense of shame as well, stating that their reputation as virile warriors and marauders was at stake.

[92] See his letter to the Duke of Mazowsze (*Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, nr. 280, pp. 424–426).

In the meantime Elizabeth had taken possession of the city of Bratislava but not the fortress. In October she moved to besiege the latter.[93] It was defended by Stephen Rozgony, brother of Simon, who had consistently been among the king's most zealous supporters. Wladislas sent a small force under one of his Polish commanders[94] to harry Elizabeth's troops, but a much larger force was necessary to relieve the castle. It was for this reason that the king ordered Ujlaki[95] to bring his troops from the southern border, exposing the region to the Turks in order to save one of his most important strongholds in the north from Elizabeth's army. Wladislas moved his troops to a region near the castle and waited for Ujlaki, who arrived at the end of January. Realizing a decisive showdown was about to take place Elizabeth turned to Austria (though not necessarily Frederick III) for assistance. Should Bratislava fall, she warned, Vienna would be next. Indeed it was not long before Čapek's mercenaries appeared on the Austrian border, a threat which prompted the Viennese to send 1,000 soldiers and some cannon, as well as to begin mobilizing their own troops for defense.[96]

In the meantime Wladislas appeared before the city of Bratislava and besieged it "with a wagenburg,"[97] thus in effect besieging the besiegers. He also succeeded in breaking through to the fortress and to Stephen Rozgony, and he entered the castle around 15 February, 1442. Elizabeth, seeing that the city of Bratislava's days were now numbered, fled from the siege and sought refuge in Austria. Her reception was a cold one. The assistance Elizabeth received from Vienna during the siege was despite Frederick's own wishes,[98] and relations between him and the queen had cooled.[99] Most importantly, however, Frederick feared what Wladislas might do once he had finished with the queen, particularly if Frederick were seen to be providing direct assistance. But the wheel of fortune took a turn once again. With the arrival of Giskra's forces in the region and the reinforcements from Vienna the city of Bratislava was able to hold out

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93 On the siege see Dąbrowski, pp. 70–72.

94 John Tęczyński. He played an active role in Wladislas' military throughout the civil war.

95 See the letter mentioned above.

96 Dąbrowski, p. 72.

97 Ibid. This may be the first time Wladislas found himself at the head of a tabor while King of Hungary, though he had been accustomed to commanding such an army in previous wars, particularly in Bohemia.

98 Dąbrowski, p. 73.

99 See Baczkowski, "Stosunek," pp. 23–24.

against Wladislas' army. In the end he was forced to lift the siege and by March's end he had returned to Buda. Exhausted, the two sides entered into negotiations once again.

The fighting from 1441–1442 had brought almost no change in the balance of power since the war's commencement in the summer of 1440. Elizabeth, though able to maintain and even slightly expand her position in the north was unable to prosecute her cause elsewhere in the kingdom. She was forced to rely on Frederick III and the Austrians to provide her with the means to continue the struggle. Her strategy was one of survival, not victory. Frederick III, however, seemed to realize after Bratislava that the dangerous game he was playing could have disastrous consequences should Wladislas take the armies raised to fight Elizabeth and turn them against Austria instead. He and Chancellor Schlick preferred negotiations to the unpredictable hazards of war, particularly since Frederick III was to be absent in the coming months dealing with affairs in Germany.[100] But their wariness towards Wladislas' armies would not abate, and continued even when these armies were obviously intended for the Turks.

Wladislas, King of Hungary and Poland, had made no headway after two whole years of intense armed struggle. What he had succeeded in doing was draining the treasuries of two kingdoms in order to wage a civil war. Wladislas' armies were drawn from three main sources. On the one hand there were personal adherents, his *familia*, comprised of men such as the Rozgonys, Pallocis, Thallocis, Ujlaki, Hunyadi, etc. These expected to be rewarded for their service and Wladislas was often able to oblige them by granting lands and offices he had confiscated from Elizabeth's men. The second main source of troops came from Poland. Initially, while the enterprise still enjoyed Oleśnicki's backing, the Polish government enacted taxes to support the king. After the first year, however, the king had to pay for these men out of his own pocket. The king was also forced to finance the third group comprising his army—mercenaries. Like all soldiers of fortune they expected prompt payment in cash.

As a new king and foreigner seated on a contested throne Wladislas was in too weak a position to resort to direct taxation. Just as Sigismund at the beginning of his reign, Wladislas resorted to doling out the royal demesne.[101] This was done in the form of land endowments. In exchange for cash the king would grant the lender the profits from lands, mills, customs duties, etc. until the loan had been repaid. This meant that the king

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[100] Among these was his own coronation. See Baczkowski, "Stosunek," p. 25.

[101] The source of these figures and their explanation is in Baczkowski, *Dzieje*, p. 152.

lost this income himself, requiring him to seek more loans, establishing a vicious cycle of debt. In his four years in Hungary Wladislas issued several times the number of endowments he had during his six previous years in Poland.[102] In 1440 the royal chancellery issued approximately 100 endowments for around 28,000 Polish Marks (grzywien). A similar amount was issued in 1441. In 1442 the amount of endowments practically doubled to around 48,000 Marks. The issuance of such endowments continued in 1443 and 1444, after the civil war had abated. But the amounts were far reduced, less than half of what they had been during the first two years of Wladislas' Hungarian reign.

For this and other reasons the enduring civil war in Hungary provoked a change in Polish attitudes towards Wladislas' reign in Hungary. The combined might of Poland and Hungary, originally destined to defend Christendom from the Turks, was instead being used to save the Hungarians from themselves. As mentioned in chapter three Poland had itself been the victim of devastating Muslim Tartar raids. Problems between Mazovia and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were growing and would soon turn into open, armed conflict. The resources of the kingdom, not to mention the king himself, were not being applied against these threats and concerns but were being siphoned off to a people seen by many Poles as less than deserving.

The Church and the Crusade—1442

As mentioned in chapter one the papacy's plans in 1439 for a crusade to take place in the Spring/Summer of 1440 were derailed by the death of Albert II. All Eugene could do was wait for his successor and start up the project once again. As we have seen, however, there was no single successor to all of Albert's inheritance, and certain parts of this fragmented legacy were openly contested. Albert's successor as "King of the Romans" was the most natural and logical choice to lead the armies of Christendom. It was with this in mind that Eugene wrote to his two nuncios present at the Imperial Diet in Frankfurt in January 1440 where the Imperial Electors were to choose a new king. The pope wrote down his private instructions

[102] This was despite the fact that at that time he had also prosecuted wars and dealt with crises, for example the Bohemian Wars against Albert II.

to the delegates on how to promote papal affairs at the assembly. These instructions give important insight into the papal agenda in early 1440.[103]

First of all the pope tells the nuncios to work with the elected king to ensure the defense of the Holy See. Along these same lines they are to ensure that the king send to the papacy the letters announcing his electoral victory as well as the election document itself. The pope would then "confirm" these documents. The exercise of this prerogative was intended as a clear demonstration of papal, versus conciliar, authority. Next, the pope ordered the nuncios not to leave the side of the elected king for any reason, wherever he may be, but follow him daily and visit him at Mass and elsewhere speaking all the while of the depravity, ambition and impudence of the council and its idol, the antipope Felix V. While decrying the council they are also obliged to inform the elected king of the glorious work of union with the Greeks and Armenians, emphasizing the numbers of Christians this has brought back into the Church. From there, they should steer the conversation to the topic of crusade. After discussing the promise made to the Byzantine Emperor John VIII of a military expedition by land and sea to expel the Ottomans from Europe, they should then bring up the pope's earlier request to Albert to raise an army and lead the expedition. From there they should mention the imminent threat of Turkish invasion facing Hungary after the death of Albert, and that the new king should bravely gird himself to defend Christendom.[104]

The letter is an open testament to the way in which the East-West union, the schism and the anti-Turkish crusade were all linked together. In accordance with papal propaganda the selfish, schismatic program of the council was to be contrasted with the glorious work of union wrought by Eugene. The union itself presented both an opportunity and an obligation in the form of the anti-Turkish crusade. The pope and the empire, the religious and secular heads of Christendom, would work together to fulfill this promise, protecting Christendom, furthering union and liberating Europe. There was no role for the council.

Given Eugene IV's concern over the assembly at Basel it would seem natural that the question of *obedience*[105] would determine whom he would support in the dispute over the Hungarian throne. Although Poland was leaning in the direction of the conciliarists, Wladislas' per-

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[103] *Deutsche Reichtagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III* (*1440–1441*), pp. 200–202.

[104] Union was achieved at Florence with the Armenian church in November 1439.

[105] That is, which pope the candidates chose to support, Eugene IV or the conciliar Pope Felix V.

sonal obedience to Pope Eugene IV had been a pre-condition for accepting the Hungarian crown. Both Wladislas and the Hungarian Church maintained their support of Eugene throughout his reign, and this support intensified as time went on.[106] The council, on the other hand, fervently and unconditionally supported Elizabeth, perhaps in an attempt to win the Habsburgs over to the conciliar cause. The pope initially supported Elizabeth as well. This is evident in his treatment of his own legate John de Dominis, who at Elizabeth's instigation and contrary to Wladislas' wishes was removed by the pope from the Bishopric of Veszprem to make way for Elizabeth's own proposed candidate. Eugene also granted a cardinal's hat to Elizabeth's relative and Wladislas' enemy Dionysius Szecsi, who as Primate of the Church of Hungary was now the highest-ranking prelate in the kingdom.[107]

The Habsburg Frederick III became the newly-elected King of the Romans. This was an important factor in Eugene's early decision to support Elizabeth's candidacy in the Hungarian civil war. By supporting Albert's widow the pope might curry favor with the new Habsburg ruler, whom the pope had still marked as the leader of the planned Anti-Turkish crusade. For this reason Eugene IV hoped Frederick III would succeed Albert II in Hungary and Bohemia as well. It was at least hoped that he would have strong allies in these kingdoms, a situation which would greatly facilitate an expedition. This is evident in another letter of instruction from 1440 for papal delegates at the court of Frederick III.[108] His instructions ask that the representative begin by congratulating Frederick and mentioning his qualities and those of other Habsburg rulers. The second part of their instructions concerns the duties of the Holy Roman Emperor in general. They are to gloss over the duties of governance, focusing on the emperor's role as defender of the faith against schismatics (Felix V and the council) and heretics and infidels. The emperor must be willing to shed his own blood if necessary to protect those threatened and liberate those who are enslaved.[109]

The pope outlined his plan of combined operations between a Christian army composed of troops "above all from Hungary" working in conjunction with a Greek army led by the Byzantine Emperor. In the event that Frederick "should lead his force out of Hungary" the papacy will offer

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[106] Dąbrowski, p. 83.
[107] Dąbrowski, p. 82.
[108] *Deutsche Reichtagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III* (*1440–1441*), pp. 475–481.
[109] Ibid., p. 478.

a maritime fleet of 20 ships to attack the Turks by sea. The pope also mentioned his negotiations with Albert II regarding this plan, and that these were nullified by the latter's death. Yet what Albert was unable to fulfill, Frederick, as his successor, should hasten to accomplish. The pope was ready and willing to assist Frederick in whatever way he could, specifically in soliciting the participation of other Christian rulers from whom assistance is to be expected.[110]

Despite Eugene's intentions, it became increasingly clear throughout 1440 that the above plan was no longer viable. Albert's inheritance was divided. Bohemia, Hungary and the Empire were to be ruled by three separate persons. Frederick III, Albert's successor in Germany, had adopted a position of neutrality between pope and council and had shown no eagerness to take up the cross. Most importantly Hungary, the main pillar of any expedition, was weakened by civil war. The pope did not give up, and in the autumn he still felt it would be possible to put together a coalition by the spring of 1441. Writing in August[111] to his representative in Constantinople, Eugene complained that the death of Albert and the situation in Hungary had derailed plans for a land expedition. In terms of the fleet, however, he was expecting contributions from Venice, Genoa, Rhodes and Constantinople. God willing, should the situation in Hungary improve, the planned expedition might still take place.

Eugene may still have entertained the notion that the Habsburgs and Elizabeth would win in Hungary and that Frederick would lead a combined German-Hungarian army against the Turks. Yet his letter suggests a lack of certainty regarding the outcome in Hungary, and that therefore the potential leader of the expedition was now an open question. Wladislas certainly seemed a viable candidate. Even prior to his election in 1440 Oleśnicki tried to assure the papacy that Wladislas would fervently pursue the anti-Turkish crusade.[112] This was expressed even more clearly to the pope in Wladislas' letter announcing his election to the throne. He presents the election as benefitting the defense of Christendom since it

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[110] Ibid., pp. 478–479.

[111] The letter, written to Christophoro Garatoni, is dated 25 August, 1440. Hoffmann, *Epistolae pontificae*, nr. 243, pp. 17–21.

[112] Oleśnicki informed Cesarini in a letter from 13 January that he was going to keep the papal nuncio at court (who had probably informed the cardinal of the planned expedition) until the negotiations regarding the Hungarian Crown were finished. In the same letter he writes: "Spes siquidem communis omnium est, rem hanc optimum habituram finem, ex qua auspice Deo sequetur repressio infidelium et fidei orthodoxae dilatatio et augmentum."

would combine the might of two great kingdoms against the infidel. In other words, with the Jagiellonians reigning in Hungary they were in a position to offer up a combined force greater than that of the Habsburgs. The newly-elected king made it a point to express his own subservience to the pope in the matter, humbly asking for Eugene's guidance "so that these two kingdoms, which in this corner of Europe are the wall and shield of Christendom against the barbarians, might better satisfy the great expectations had of them."[113]

In any case, by mid-1440 Eugene had adopted a neutral approach to the war in Hungary, perhaps expecting the conflict would soon resolve itself militarily after which he could negotiate with the victor. This policy did not please Wladislas, who expected active backing from the papacy in light of his own support for Eugene IV in Hungary. He wrote to Eugene in the spring of 1441 expressing his grievances and demanding the pope recognize his right to appoint bishops and fill other Hungarian ecclesiastical offices. In exchange for this he suggested he would promote Eugene's cause in Poland as well. This task was difficult, for both the University of Krakow and Cardinal Oleśnicki, the most authoritative voices in the Polish Church, had strong affinities and ties with the conciliarists. In December of 1441 the Polish church declared itself firmly on the side of the council, acknowledging Felix V as the legitimate pope.[114] This split in the stance of the two kingdoms and the possibility of Wladislas' defection to the conciliarists may have been a factor driving Eugene IV to seek a resolution to the civil war in Hungary. The king was pushed in the conciliar direction not only by his Polish subjects, most specifically his loyal secretary and most important Polish official in Hungary, Nicholas Lasocki, but also by his cousin the Patriarch of Aquilea who was among the most fervent conciliarists. Eugene was no doubt concerned that the civil war and Wladislas' contested throne might affect Hungary's stated obedience to the papacy. Yet a more immediate problem was the effect the war was having on Eugene's ability to undertake the promised expedition against the Turks.

Throughout 1442, the papacy's plans for crusade seemed wholly contingent on the outcome of peace negotiations in Hungary. Yet the political situation in that kingdom was not the sole reason for the delayed expedition. An important factor was the sad state of papal finances. The

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113 *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 1, nr. 111, pp. 120–121.

114 *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, nr. 282, pp. 428–429. Dąbrowski, p. 85.

council of Ferrara/Florence, which had now moved to Rome, had been extremely costly, particularly the expenses incurred by the papacy for the upkeep of the Byzantine Emperor and his retinue. Papal revenue collection was further hamstrung by the schism. It limited Eugene's ability to raise funds not only because of split obediences, but because the harsh imposition of taxes might drive people in the direction of Basel in order to avoid payment. In short, Eugene had a very hard time even keeping the original promises he had made to John VIII concerning direct papal support in the form of men and ships. His current finances would not allow him to expand this support.

Another reason for the Church's inactivity between 1440 and 1442 was the status of the East-West Union and the situation in Byzantium. In his letter to his legate Garatoni from August of 1440 Eugene expressed frustration that the letter promulgating the union had not yet been published in Constantinople.[115] Garatoni seems to have explained the tenuous situation there in sufficiently bleak terms, and the pope ordered him to proceed cautiously and not place the union in jeopardy by insisting too strongly on sensitive issues. On the other hand, Eugene IV seemed genuinely frustrated with what he perceived as a lack of effort on the part of John VIII. Yet the byzantine emperor was himself in a rather precarious position. The union had a mixed reception back in Constantinople.[116] And John's most important argument behind conceding to the union, i.e. the promise of military assistance to the Turks, had in no way materialized. Bartolomeo di Giano, the head of the Franciscan priory in Constantinople, harangued Eugene IV in the spring of 1440 for his perceived lack of zeal for an expedition. Noting that the pope had sent preachers to promote the union, he realized that armed assistance would deliver a more forceful message: "You have sent, most Holy Father, many monks and preachers of the word of God to the regions of the East, but certainly swords, spears, lances and arrows would preach better in these parts."[117]

Much of the educated political elite seemed able and willing to accommodate themselves to the East-West Union. However, as council historian Joseph Gill writes, "There is no doubt that from the very beginning the mass of the population of Constantinople—the 'man in the street', that is, and the innumerable ill-educated, and often vagrant, monks who

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[115] Hoffmann, *Epistolae pontificae*, nr. 243, pp. 17–21.

[116] For a full discussion of how the union was received see Gill, *The Council of Florence*, pp. 359–388.

[117] Pertusi, "La Situazione," p. 349.

were his spiritual guides—was hostile to the Union of Florence."[118] Mark Eugenicus, Archbishop of Ephesus, who had opposed the negotiations for union at the Council of Florence, became the ecclesiastical champion of the anti-unionists. He and the masses felt that the emperor and indeed the entire House of Palaeologus had betrayed its people.

A notable exception was the dynasty's black sheep—Demetrios Palaeologus. In 1432 the last of the old Frankish rulers of Achaea passed away, and the defense of the Morean Despotate fell once again to the Byzantines. It was ruled as an appanage by John VIII's brothers Thomas, Constantine, Theodore and Demetrios. Of these, Constantine seemed most suited to the throne.[119] He was a fervent supporter of John VIII's policies, particularly his militant attitude towards the Turks, and for this John VIII had marked him as his heir. He had served as regent of Constantinople while John VIII attended the Council of Florence/Ferrara. This placed him at odds with his other brother, Demetrios, who, as mentioned in chapter one, was ardently opposed to union and the latinophiles. For this reason Demetrios left the council early, despite the emperor's wishes. John VIII removed his appanage in the Morea for this disobedience and gave him another one far away from the capital in Messembria on the Black Sea, where he could presumably cause less trouble. It was then decided by Constantine and John VIII that Demetrios should take up Constantine's lands in the Morea and the latter would receive Messembria as well as Selybria and Derka, the latter two being nearer to the capital. He would reside in Constantinople and John VIII would groom him for the throne.[120] Demetrios naturally refused to comply with this plan, and sought the assistance of the Turks. His aim was to force John VIII to grant him the appanage of Selybria, a plan which, given Selybria's strategic position, was in the Ottomans' interest as well. On April 23, 1442, Demetrios and the Turks besieged Constantinople. The Byzantines and John VIII were in a panic.

Earlier that year, in February, John VIII had dispatched his emissary and western liaison John Torcello[121] to visit the West, drum up assistance, and report on the prevailing mood there regarding the crusade. Torcello

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[118] Gill, *The Council of Florence*, p. 350.

[119] Indeed, he would succeed John VIII and become the last Emperor of Constantinople.

[120] Sphrantzes himself was assigned to this diplomatic mission, and he is the primary source for these events (Sphrantzes, 53). See also Chalkokondyles, pp. 306–307.

[121] For more on Torcello, who was well known in the West and was also working for Eugene IV, see chapter one.

was given a non-committal response by the Venetians, who said they were first waiting to hear the intentions of the Holy Roman Emperor regarding the proposed expedition.[122] The matter became much more urgent with the arrival of Demetrios and the Turks before the walls of the capital in April.[123] John VIII appealed to Eugene IV, but the papacy had neither the means nor the will to assist. Having found no sympathy and assistance from the pope the Byzantines turned once again to Venice for help. Aside from escorting a few ships, the Republic of Saint Mark showed little interest. Venice's zeal for fighting the Turks had cooled considerably by the 1440s, with the memories of a long, horrendously expensive and ultimately failed war over Thessaloniki[124] from 1423–1430 still exerting a strong influence over the senate. The Venetian attitude is summed up well by the Venetians themselves in a letter sent to Matthew Thalloci in 1440:

> As regards the Turks we reply that it is known throughout the world that we fought against the Turk for a long time, at great hardship and expense, shedding the blood of our citizens and sacrificing our cities. In this we received no help or favor from anyone. At length, seeing that we were alone, we became forced to conclude a peace with the Turk, which has since been extremely well-observed by both sides. We are not able to violate it without prejudicing our honor and doing damage to ourselves. But with the passage of time things might develop such that we could do these things for the salvation of Christians which you request, and which we have done in the past.[125]

The Venetians were not interested in embarking on another expedition unless the prospects seemed much better than they had up to now. They had taken on the Ottomans fifteen years prior and had failed. Every loss to the Turks meant corresponding losses of territory and trading stations which were integral to successful business. But this does not mean that they were against the idea of an anti-Turkish crusade *per se*, as the letter clearly states. Indeed, a Christian victory with Venetian participation would enable the Republic to regain some of its steadily receding Eastern Mediterranean empire. More importantly, the Venetians were always

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[122] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, p. 83.

[123] *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vol. 1, chronicle 29, nr. 11, p. 216. The chronicle says that the siege began on 23 April and that the fleet undertaking the siege departed on 23 August. The signing of a peace treaty, however, took place much later, however.

[124] For an excellent description of this war, see Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, vol. II, pp. 17–35.

[125] Ljubić, p. 134.

seeking a way to eke out an advantage over their main mercantile rivals in the Eastern Mediterranean—the Genoese. The Genoese were no friends of the Byzantines either, and they relied on the Ottomans for their favored trading position in the Black Sea and Bosphorus. Several years prior, in 1436, the Genoese in Pera (a mercantile colony separated from the Byzantine capital only by a narrow bay) attempted an assault on Constantinople with cannons and galleys, and the Byzantines had responded in kind. To the same extent that John VIII despised the Genoese Murad II favored them. This relationship had begun when the Genoese helped Murad regain his throne early on in his reign.[126] Iacopo de Promontorio's presence at Murad's court for years as a trade liaison is in itself a testament to these relations.

If the Ottomans succeeded in overrunning Constantinople, the Genoese would likely have favored trading rights in the city. This of course drove the Venetians in the direction of Byzantium. Should the empire revive itself with Venetian assistance the Republic stood to gain far more than its rivals. Yet in 1442 the question of Byzantine revival was a moot one. The Hungarians were in the midst of a civil war that had expanded to involve Frederick III as well, who himself had shown no fervor for the expedition. Yet Constantinople remained under siege. In August the Byzantines sent the Franciscan Jacob de Primaditiis[127] to plead for assistance from the pope and the Venetian senate. He asked the Venetians to send three galleys to protect Constantinople during the winter. At least those vessels escorting the Venetian fleet to the city might stay for a while and ward off an attack. The Venetians simply responded that they were waiting for the pope to make a decision.[128] The siege dragged on, with the attackers' fleet departing in August, and in September Venice decided to mediate a peace agreement between John VIII and the Ottomans, explaining to Murad that peace "was necessary for Venetian commerce in Rumelia."[129] Yet the Byzantines desired military, not diplomatic assistance. Feeling abandoned by the West, which seemed unable to come through on the assistance promised at the time of the union, the Byzantines felt compelled to find an agreement with the Turks.

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[126] See chapter two.

[127] He had been sent to Byzantium by the Pope to deal with issues related to the union soon after Cesarini's legation began. See Hoffmann, *Epistolae pontificae*, p. 72, where he is referred to as Iacobus de Bononia. His mission and appeal to the pope for assistance to the beleaugered city of Constantinople is mentioned there.

[128] Thiriet, vol. III, nr. 2588, p. 96

[129] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. III, pp. 102–103.

Their efforts would soon be helped by news of Şehabeddin's disastrous defeat in Wallachia. Upon hearing of this, the Ottomans broke the siege and sent an ambassador to John VIII to negotiate. These negotiations dragged on and a peace treaty was not signed until early or mid 1443.[130]

Attempts to End the Hungarian Civil War

It became obvious by the end of 1441 that Elizabeth had virtually no chance of victory but was nonetheless still able to distract Wladislas enough to prevent him from leading an expedition outside of the country. The two sides were locked in a stalemate, and the conflict might endure for years to come. On February 22nd Eugene IV made Cardinal Cesarini his special legate to "Hungary, Poland, Bohemia and the Diocese of Salzburg for three main purposes. First, to make peace between Wladislas ... and Elizabeth ... and free Hungary from the grip of civil war. Second, having achieved peace in Hungary, to induce Wladislas and the barons of Hungary to undertake an expedition against the Turks. Third, to obtain the full obedience of Wladislas... and Elizabeth for Pope Eugene."[131]

At the time of his appointment Cesarini was considered the most capable diplomat and arguably the most prominent figure in the curia. If anyone could broker a peace in Hungary and raise a crusading army it was he. The talented cardinal had played a central role in resolving such seemingly intractable issues as the Hussite heresy, the union between East and West, an armistice between France and England and of course the Presidency of the Council of Basel. His handling of the Hussite affair as a young bishop in the 1420s had familiarized him with issues in Central Europe, particularly in Poland and Hungary. As Cardinal Branda's assistant, Cesarini accompanied then-Emperor Sigismund into Hungary. In the beginning of 1424 Branda and Cesarini travelled from Buda north to Krakow. They were following Sigismund, who was attending the nuptials of Wladislas Jagiełło and Sophia of Kiev. Also in their company was King Eric VIII of Denmark, a guest at King Sigismund's court. The famous wedding celebration of 1424 lasted fourteen days. It was attended by rulers

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[130] According to the *Byzantinische Kleinchroniken* (chronicle 29, entry 11, p. 216), the Byzantines did not finally conclude a piece with the Ottomans until June of 1443. Yet according to information found in Jorga, *Notes et extraits,* vol. 3, p. 110, footnote 3, the peace had already been concluded by March 1443.

[131] Długosz, p. 274.

and dignitaries from throughout Christendom.[132] It was there that Cesarini first made the acquaintance not only of the parents of the soon-to-be-born Wladislas Warneńczyk, but of a number of other individuals of key significance to the events of the 1440s. Among these was Archbishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki.[133] The two shared at the time similar notions concerning the Church, and in particular the role of the council. Their familiarity with one another is evident in later correspondence, even if these betray a certain cooling of their relationship after Cesarini's defection from the conciliarists to the papacy.

After the festivities in Krakow Sigismund and Eric traveled to Buda where they celebrated together the eight days of Easter (23—30 April 1424). Here, perhaps in an attempt to outshine his Jagiellonian rivals, Sigismund received guests and emissaries from Christendom and beyond. Apart from the various princes and dukes of the Holy Roman Empire, as well as the still-resident King of Denmark, there were emissaries from the heretic Hussite leaders and from the Ottoman sultan himself. Of most significance to the Emperor, however, was the arrival of John VIII Palaeologus. John remained in Buda for two months, at which time no expense was spared in the Byzantine Emperor's upkeep and entertainment. Cesarini no doubt observed with great interest these festivities. With his charismatic personality he would have had little difficulty establishing personal contacts among the royalty and dignitaries present. It was perhaps at this time that the cardinal became fascinated with the idea of a Balkan crusade. We have already seen that Cesarini continued to

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[132] Among the clergy in attendance Długosz lists: "Branda cardinali Placentino Apostolice Sedis aput Regnum Polonie legato, Ioanne archiepiscopo Leopoliensi, Sbigneo Cracoviensi, Andrea Posnaniensi, Ioanne de Waldow Lubuczensi episcopis, Iuliano de Cesarinis Camere Apostolice auditore... Sigismundo Romanorum et Hungarie rege..." There were a number of other princes and dukes, from as far away as Lithuania and Russia. Ludwik of Bavaria, though not invited, attended anyways upon hearing of its fame. On the sixth day, the celebrated knight Zawisza Czarny of Garbów, "miles sue etatis temporibus in christianitate nulli secundus," hosted a great feast that was attended by the three kings present as well as other lords and dignitaries. No doubt Branda and Cesarini were at this feast, where they would have rubbed elbows with some of the most important figures, lay and ecclesiastic, of Central Europe. Długosz, *Annales 1413–1430*, Book XI, pp. 196–197.

[133] Cesarini and Oleśnicki were similar in a number of important ways. Both were churchmen and cardinals, and like many high-ranking clerics of the time they were deeply immersed in the humanist movement. They were both pragmatic and accomplished statesmen, both fiercely anti-Hussite, and, at least for a time, both were fervent conciliarists. Yet they differ in one important respect. Cesarini, as mentioned above, had a belief in Christendom that overrided smaller political and personal concerns. The same cannot be said of Oleśnicki.

nurture the idea of an anti-Turkish crusade throughout his years at Basel and Florence. He saw as much as anyone the increased urgency of his mission in 1442, when Byzantium itself was under siege and the union between East and West was foundering, not to mention the seemingly endless civil war in Hungary. In dispatching the cardinal to Wladislas' court, the pope must have felt that if any man could bring about a crusade expedition it was Cesarini.

While in Sigismund's entourage Cesarini had ample opportunity to get to know Kaspar Schlick. As mentioned previously Schlick was the main architect of imperial policy during the reigns of Sigismund, Albert II and Frederick III. Cesarini was also good friends with Schlick's new protégé, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who became part of Frederick III's chancellery in 1442 at the same time that Cesarini was made legate to Hungary. Cesarini and Piccolomini had first met through a mutual acquaintance, Domenico Capranica, who had been the student of Cesarini and a lifelong friend.[134] In any case, they had clearly known each other for quite some time prior to 1442. This is evident in Cesarini's own letter to Piccolomini at the time, in which he makes mention of his purpose in traveling to the Hungarian court:

> Dearest Aeneas, I am pleased to see you in a place of dignity and honor at the court of His Highness the King (Frederick III). I must confess, however, that I would prefer you were in Italy in a place more worthy of your virtue... I would like that you take me into your confidence and not forget that benevolent friendship which has always been between us... For I desire to soon be at the court of the emperor (Frederick III), that I might arrange a peace for this kingdom (Hungary), so that an expedition against the Turks—those most savage enemies of the Catholic faith—might be prepared.[135]

There is no doubt that Cesarini's contacts and experiences in Central Europe greatly facilitated his mission in 1442. His personal interest in the project provided much-needed purpose and motivation. The cardinal left Florence on March 14th,[136] stopping at Venice for over a month in order to secure his generous allowance of 500 Florints a month from Venetian bankers. He then proceeded to Vienna, perhaps to inform the Habsburgs

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[134] Piccolomini's first significant position had been as secretary to Cardinal Capranica.

[135] Wolkan, vol. 1, p. 127.

[136] Roger Mols, "Cesarini (Julien)," in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique*, ed. Baudrillart et al., vol. 12 (Paris, 1953), pp. 220–249, p. 244.

of his plans and obtain their prior consent. Yet Frederick III was still away in Germany, and Cesarini was ill-received at court.[137] He soon left Vienna and arrived at Buda in the latter half of May. Here Cardinal Cesarini was graciously welcomed. Wladislas shared Cesarini's agenda of reaching an agreement with Elizabeth and prosecuting the war against the Turks.[138] By mid-August a delegation of Wladislas' partisans, to include Nicholas Ujlaki and Stefan Batory, had reached an introductory agreement with the queen in Bratislava with the assistance of Cesarini. The agreement paved the way for future, direct negotiations with the stipulation that the queen's personal safety be provided for and that she not be forced to betroth or marry Wladislas against her will.

Aside from this formal agreement Cesarini and the Hungarian delegation had striven to work out the basic principles of a compromise with the queen.[139] Wladislas would become Ladislas' regent and rule in his name with full authority until the boy turned 15, unless Ladislas should die early without an heir. In that case Wladislas would inherit the throne entirely. He would also marry Elizabeth's daughter, Anna, who would be provided with a dowry of 200,000 Florints with the territory of Silesia offered as collateral. Poland would receive the Slovakian Zips region in perpetuity, and the Hungarians would resign all claims to Rus or Wallachia. The terms were quite favorable, offering Poland all that it had sought from its relationship with Hungary. Wladislas was eager to accept them. Yet the proposals were roundly rejected by the Royal Diet in Buda. The Hungarian noblemen saw the compromise as more in the interests of Wladislas and Elizabeth than in the interests of Hungary. The king was forced to convene another diet in September, but on this occasion as well the Hungarians rejected the proposed compromise. Dąbrowski postulates[140] that the real reason the diet rejected the terms was that it upheld a hereditary view of the Hungarian Crown, rather than an elected one, a principle which the Hungarian nobles had sought to underline with their election of Wladislas in 1440.

The diet's refusal of Elizabeth's terms dealt a blow to Cesarini's efforts. He was forced to go back to the queen with the diet's own counter-terms, which Elizabeth roundly rejected. To avoid further armed conflict Cesarini at least succeeded in negotiating an armistice between the two

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137 Ibid., p. 240.
138 Dąbrowski, p. 86.
139 For these terms see Długosz, pp. 275–276. Dąbrowski, pp. 87–89.
140 Dąbrowski, p. 90.

parties that was to last until 23 June 1443. At the same time the queen gave the cardinal another set of terms, which he brought back to Buda, but which received a cold reception even from the king. The queen had, among others, demanded the possession of thirteen counties. Gone from these terms were the generous concessions to Poland. Interestingly, the queen had also demanded Wladislas' support in obtaining her son and the Holy Crown from Frederick III should the latter refuse to recognize her and Wladislas' agreement.

Cesarini showed his characteristic perseverance at this point and worked feverishly, despite his mounting frustration, to bring the seemingly intractable parties together. He succeeded. On 14 December, 1442, a final consensus was reached in Győr. The terms of the agreement were quite detailed, with Elizabeth attempting to ensure her own power and independence (not only from Wladislas but also from Frederick III) through specific territorial acquisitions. Absent again were any concessions to Poland, despite all the men and money the Polish kingdom had spent in securing Wladislas' reign. This slap in face only increased the antagonism of the Polish nobility towards the Hungarians. Wladislas himself gained little, not even a recognition of his own authority, but merely his right to be the regent of Ladislas. This regency, as well as the arrangement of his marriage with Elizabeth's daughter Anna, were only notional. Both persons were still at the court of Frederick III, who had neither been involved in the negotiations nor expressed consent to any of the terms.

The main thing Wladislas achieved through the treaty of Győr was a guarantee of peace for the foreseeable future. Such a peace was the prerequisite to any Turkish expedition. Indeed, the very last term of the treaty stated that in the event of peace, both parties were to commit themselves through all possible means to undertake an *efficax et notabilis aggressio* against the Turks.[141] The fact that Wladislas was willing to sacrifice so much and accept such a disadvantageous peace is evidence of a shift in the king's priorities at the end of 1442. Both he and the court were dead set on launching an expedition against the Ottomans.

The king had continued to present himself, despite the ongoing civil war, as a crusader king. This was true even when Oleśnicki and the Polish court had somewhat cooled to the idea.[142] Not all of Wladislas' attitudes

[141] Dąbrowski, p. 93. Latin phrase appears on p. 95.

[142] Oleśnicki, who was in support of the council, no doubt saw that a successful crusade would lead to a strengthening of the pope's position. Like many Poles, he no

in this regard can be ascribed to political motivations. The king was 18-years-old in 1442. He had only been sixteen when he assumed the Hungarian throne. Both earlier and later events seem to suggest that he was, like most young men, full of ambition, impressionable and idealistic. Furthermore, the king was trying to assert himself as an independent and mature adult ruler, no longer under the thumb of Oleśnicki and his other advisors. In other words, he had a need to prove himself. Fighting the Turks provided ample opportunity to do so, as Hunyadi had clearly shown.

The king's age and disposition made Cardinal Cesarini's job all the easier. The legate succeeded in conveying his own visions of Christendom and the Universal Church not only to Wladislas but to his court as well. This is most apparent in the king's most trusted and influential advisor, the Dean of Krakow Nicholas Lasocki.[143] Lasocki had known Cesarini during his time at the Council of Basel. Afterwards, Lasocki had persisted in his conciliarist outlook along with Oleśnicki and other significant figures in the Polish Church. After Cesarini's arrival at court, Lasocki began to adopt more and more the views of the cardinal and he, too, ultimately split with the conciliarists. This alienated Lasocki from his former mentor Oleśnicki. The latter was hundreds of miles away and his influence with Wladislas was waning. Lasocki was in Hungary at the king's side, and reenforced Cesarini's persuasive convictions. A final factor pushing Wladislas and his court in the direction of crusade were the startling victories Hunyadi won against the Turks in Hungary in 1442. Though the success at Belgrade and the Battle of the Sava had proven the Hungarians were capable of surviving the Ottoman onslaught, the victories of 1442 inspired the hope that they might actually defeat the Turks altogether. Wladislas saw firsthand the glory and reputation won by Hunyadi in vanquishing the Ottomans. He was no doubt moved to partake of this himself.

Cesarini's efforts and the king's carefully laid plans were completely derailed when on 19 December, a week after reaching their agreement, Elizabeth died of a sudden illness. Frederick III and more importantly John Giskra, neither of whom had been directly involved in the negotiations, emerged with claims as the orphan Ladislas' legitimate protectors. Frederick III, it seems, was less concerned with the situation in Hungary and more concerned with securing his own duchy in Austria, to which

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doubt also felt the need for Wladislas to return to Poland for a time and handle affairs there.

[143] Dąbrowski, pp. 85–86.

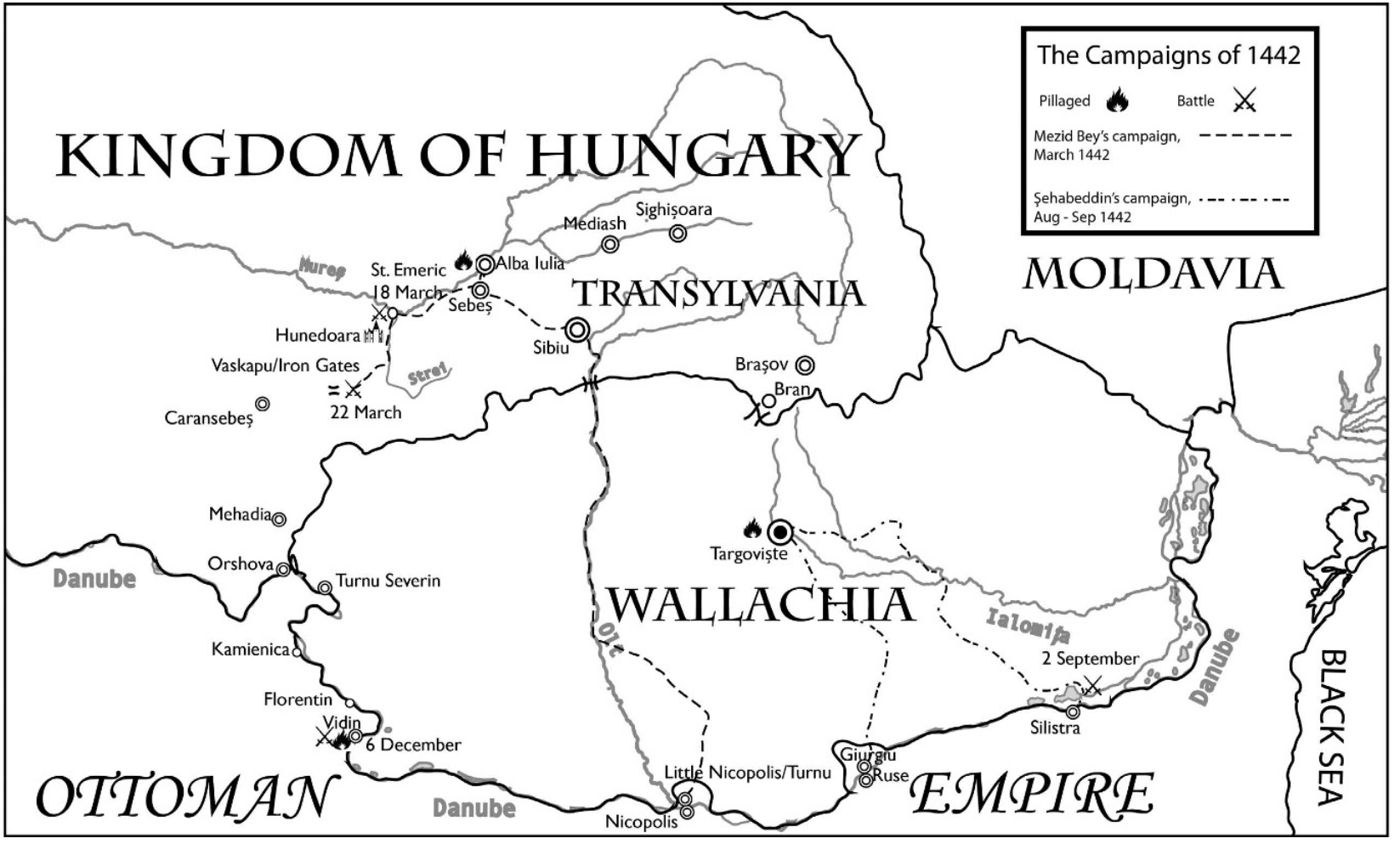
the infant Ladislas certainly held a claim, a claim the Hungarians might pursue on Ladislas' behalf were he released to his supposed native realm. Giskra seemed more interested in using Ladislas as a pretext to establishing his own state in the north, independent of Hungary, an endeavor in which he was largely successful up until his death. The infant boy thus remained a powerful political tool. For these reasons, by the end of 1442, after several months of renewed effort and intense negotiations, nothing had been accomplished by Cesarini other than an armistice which was due to expire in June the following year.

The Turkish Wars of 1442

The campaigns of 1442 mark a turning point in the struggles discussed in this work. If Belgrade marked the breaking of the wave of Turkish aggression, 1442 marked this wave's rapid recession. In the course of the year Hunyadi would win a total of four victories against the Ottomans, two of which were quite decisive. This had the effect of reversing the dominance of the war party in Edirne, particularly when its strongest adherent, Şehabeddin Pasha, was himself defeated and forced to skulk back to the capital in shame. To understand this, it is necessary to take a look back at the Ottoman court and the events from 1440 on.

The Siege of Belgrade, though a setback, did not cause the Ottomans to reverse their policy of conquest. After all, from 1438 to 1441 they had succeeded in the conquest of Serbia, including the successful siege of two major fortresses (Novo Brdo and Smederevo). They had launched numerous raids into eastern and western Hungary, as well as Bosnia and Wallachia. They had not only weakened enemy opposition but enriched themselves in the process. This served to confirm the soundness and profitability of an aggressive, expansionist policy promoted by certain elements at court. This is visible once again in the composition of the divan. During these years Şehabeddin was second at court only to Halil Pasha, who could not be shaken from his post as Grand Vezir. Yet Halil's eroding influence is most evident in the siege of Constantinople, a military action he almost certainly opposed.[144] The third vezir was Fazlullah, one of the

[144] Based on his previous attitudes toward besieging the city (see chapter two) and his later opposition, in 1453, which caused his eventual downfall. His peaceful attitude towards the city was remarked by the Byzantines as well.



Map 3. The Battles of 1442.

authors of a hyper-aggressive expansionist policy.[145] Halil was outnumbered and forced to accommodate himself to the war hawks and their strategy for the Empire.

Şehabeddin was not only vezir but also Beylerbey of Rumelia. He intended to use his influence in this key military position to continue the momentum of Ottoman conquest. After the setback at Belgrade the Ottomans spent much of 1441 regrouping and consolidating their newly acquired territories in Serbia. Another factor contributing to the absence of any major military expedition in 1441 was the Sultan's ill health, and Murad spent a good portion of the year resting in the mineral baths of Sophia.[146] Hunyadi's raid and Ishak Bey's defeat in that year had no doubt inflamed the Ottomans, but the battle was a minor one, and aside from provoking anger and wariness among the Turks it was not decisive. This does not mean it could go unpunished. Just as the raid on Kruševac had sparked a large-scale invasion of Transylvania in 1438, so Hunyadi's incursion into Ottoman territory had to be answered in kind.

Yet there were more issues at stake in 1442 than mere reprisal. First and foremost was the question of the political alignment of Wallachia, where the Hungarian and Ottoman contest for influence took on renewed intensity after the fall of Serbia. Vlad Dracul had become voivode of Wallachia in 1436, supported in part by the Hungarians, among whom he had lived for quite some time. Yet the events of 1438, in which he was forced to guide the sultan on his raid through Transylvania, showed that similar to his predecessors Vlad would bow to the Ottomans if necessary. Hunyadi seemed intent on reasserting Hungarian influence over the voivode. As late as mid-October 1441 Hunyadi ordered the citizens of Braşov to continue to mint coin for Dracul until after Hunyadi had a chance to meet with Vlad in early November. At the same time Vlad was

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[145] In truth there are no lists of vezirs for the first half of 1442 (845 h.) For the year 846 h. (12 May 1442–30 April 1443 AD) Şehabeddin is listed as beylerbey, a position which he held until his defeat by Hunyadi in 1442 whereupon he was replaced as beylerbey by Kasim Pasha. At the end of 846 h. the vezirs were Halil Pasha, Fazlullah Pasha and Kasım Pasha respectively. It is logical to assume that Şehabeddin not only held the office of beylerbey in 846 h. but also the office of vezir. He had held both offices in 842 h. (Oruç Bey, p. 61) and likely continued to hold them in the intervening years. This scenario is supported by the fact that his replacement as Beylerbey in 846 h., Kasım Pasha, is also listed by Oruç Bey (p. 63) as a vezir. He thus succeeded Şehabeddin in both offices. Therefore it is logical to assume that the vezirs in 846 h., prior to Şehabeddin's defeat, were Halil Pasha, Fazlullah Pasha and Şehabeddin Pasha.

[146] See the text of the letter below.

negotiating trade privileges with the city's citizens.[147] Both of these indicate a rapprochement between Hunyadi and Dracul.

The increasing closeness between Dracul and the Hungarians was cause for alarm at the Porte. Some time between late October 1441 and early 1442 the Ottomans cajoled Vlad into traveling to the Ottoman capital. Soon after arriving he was imprisoned.[148] His fourteen-year-old son, Mircea II, was placed on the throne instead. His obedience to the Porte was assured not only by his father's position as a hostage in Gallipoli prison, but also by the confinement of two of Dracul's other sons, Vlad and Radu, in the Ottoman city of Egrigöz.[149] As Wavrin writes, "Left without shepherd or guardian, [Murad] could conquer [the Wallachians] easily."[150] It is likely that the Porte hoped to reduce Wallachia to vassaldom, if not annex it entirely in the coming year or two and make it a secure part of the Empire.

The task was made more urgent by the Ottomans' inability after the failed siege at Belgrade to find access into Hungary from the west. The siege of 1440 not only cost the Porte men and materiel but also a large part of their river fleet, which they required to ferry troops across the Danube.[151] This is supported by the fact that Ottoman raiders were forced to focus their raids in 1441 on Slavonia, or the area between the Sava and Drava. There was no sign of them in west central Hungary. With the door of Belgrade firmly closed, easier entry into the lands of their powerful Balkan rival might be gained from the east, but only with the elimination of the Wallachian buffer state.

Mezid Bey,[152] the Marcher Lord of Nicopolis, volunteered to lead the initial Ottoman raid into Transylvania. His first task was to assert Ottoman influence in Wallachia, then march into Hungary, to both punish Hun-

147 Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nrs. 2426 and 2427, p. 91).

148 Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 107).

149 Muresanu, p. 77.

150 Imber's translation, p. 108.

151 See chapter three.

152 For more on Mezid Bey see chapter two. Neşri describes Mezid Bey as the Imperial Master of the Horse (*Emir Ahur*). Chalkokondyles also states that he was a Slave of the Porte. Both of their accounts, however, are highly suspect regarding this campaign. Oruç Bey, the best Ottoman source for Mezid Bey's raid, clearly states that he was a marcher lord. Brocquière also mentions a marcher lord named Mezid Bey operating out of Nicopolis in the 1430s (again, see chapter two). This, combined with the fact that after Mezid Bey's defeat and death in 1442 there is suddenly a new name that appears as Marcher Lord of Nicopolis makes it fairly clear that Mezid Bey was a marcher lord and not a Slave of the Porte.

yadi's daring raid from 1441 and to distract him from providing any assistance to the anti-Ottoman parties in Wallachia. The sultan's criers proclaimed throughout Rumelia in the autumn of 1441 that a large raid into Hungary and Wallachia would take place the following March.[153] Such announcements and declarations were standard operating procedure in an akinji raid,[154] but the response to this particular one was massive. This fact was noted by the Ragusans, and conveyed to King Wladislas in a follow-up letter to the warning they had issued the king in September.[155] Massive incursions were to occur in opposite ends of the country. At the same time that the larger Ottoman force was conducting operations in Southeastern Hungary, another force, likely led by Ishak Bey, raided the region between the Sava and Drava in the southwestern regions of the kingdom. These two actions forced the Hungarians to divide their own forces in defense of the realm, despite the fact that the civil war was being fought with great intensity in the north.[156]

The campaign, in terms of the route chosen and the start date, was inversely identical to Murad's invasion of 1438.[157] Indeed, it may have been the positive recollections from that year's highly profitable raids

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[153] The information comes from the first Ragusan letter to King Wladislas dated 17 September 1441 (Gelcich, pp. 437–438): "Habuimus nuperrime ex veridicis relatibus, qualiter magnus Teucer fidei Christi perniciosissimus hostis, quem gravissimis egritudinibus et incurabili morbo teneri dicebatur, nunc sanus et incolumis est, eumque quotidie elaborare et conari, quo pacto potentissimum et illustrissimum Hungariae regnum diripere, vastare ac vi et ferro subvertere possit. Et iam per diversas Romanie et Natalie loca publice banniri et proclamare fecit, ut quilibet tam per terram, quam per aquam ad eius stipendium militare volens paratus esse debeat, et ad eum proficisci pro mense Marcii proxime futura, cum hac vere proxime futura Hungarie regnum invadere omnino intendat ad persecucionem incolarum ipsius regni nec non ad damna omnium Christicolarum."

[154] See chapters two and four. Also, see Mihalović, p. 179: "the emissaries... without delay order that it be cried throughout the cities, naming the voivode and the region, praising this expedition to them, saying to them: 'You will be led into such rich lands that you will take plenty of males and females and also all sorts of other booty.' Then the raiders, having heard the expedition praised so, and the summons of it, rejoice, whooping, and proceeding without delay they march to the appointed place where the voivode himself is."

[155] Gelcich, pp. 437–439.

[156] See Szabó Anikó, ed., *Levéltári Közlemények*, vol. 16, pp. 129–130. A court case is prorogued on account of Matthew Thalloci's absence due to a major Turkish invasion in Slavonia. See also Dąbrowski, p. 104.

[157] Though the route was the same, it was taken in reverse. Mezid Bey began in Wallachia, and intended to travel on his return through the Iron Gates and Caransebeş back to Vidin. For a thorough description and critical analysis of the source material for the campaigns of 1442, see my article titled: "The Ottoman-Hungarian Campaigns of 1442."

that attracted so many to Mezid Bey in 1442. In early March some 16,000 raiders[158] and other soldiers gathered around the marcher lord and crossed the Danube into Wallachia[159] at the town of Nicopolis. From here the akinji marched in formation northward.[160]

Hunyadi, who was in the west perhaps to assist against the raids taking place there, received advanced warning of the attack on Transylvania and marched quickly east, entering the area a few days before Mezid Bey. He summoned the army of Transylvania, including Saxons, Vlachs and his own *familiares,* urging them to assemble as swiftly as possible. Much of the local populace had already sought shelter in the mountains surrounding the Mureş valley,[161] knowing that the Turkish raiders would not pursue them where the terrain was difficult and the opportunities for plunder few. Soldiers were assembling at the same time in Sibiu, under the leadership of the Saxon mayor of the city Anton Trautenberger. A contingent of Wallachian troops, likely under the command of Basarab II, likewise moved to join forces with the Hungarians. The Transylvanian prelate, Bishop Lepes, had in the meantime been gathering his own men in Alba

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158 This number is taken from the most reliable, albeit terse, source for these events, Wladislas' letter bestowing more lands on Hunyadi on account of his recent victories (Thálloczy, pp. 141–142, nr. 204). The letter is on the one hand contemporary to the events themselves, and on the other it is a legal document, to be received by the victor of these battles and reviewed by his contemporaries, many of whom were also participants in the campaign. The letter lists the size of Mezid Bey's force as 16,000, which is large for an akinji force but reasonable when compared, for example, to the 100,000 plus raiders cited by Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 109).

159 See Mihalović's description of Ottoman tactics regarding the early preparations for a raid (p. 179): "Then the raiders, having heard the expedition praised so, and the summons of it, rejoice, whooping, and proceeding without delay they march to the appointed place where the voivode himself is. And so the voivode (marcher lord), having welcomed them, supplies them with boats and other requisites that are appropriate for this. And having organized all these things, he will give orders to each one as to what he must set about. Then he will start transporting himself across the water; having crossed he marches in formation to the kaur (infidel) lands, leading them as far as the place he intended."

160 The place where Mezid Bey set up his camp and where the battle took place is disputed. See my article "The Ottoman-Hungarian Campaigns of 1442." The most likely location is the Iron Gates leading into Hunedoara County, which I use in the following narrative.

161 Wavrin (Imber's translation, pp. 108–110). Note that he refers only on one occasion to "Vlachs and Transylvanians," using simply the term "Vlachs" instead. There was in the fifteenth century, just as today, a Wallachian population within Transylvania, but Wavrin's use of the term is more the result of his source, which as mentioned in an earlier chapter was the Wallachians he traveled and campaigned with in 1444/45. The fact that he is discussing Transylvania and not Wallachia is clear when he describes Hunyadi as "a great lord of that realm."

Iulia (Gyulafehérvár). Hunyadi traveled there, perhaps in order to link up with the bishop's troops. Yet the sudden arrival of Mezid Bey forced them to seek shelter behind the walls of the city while the Turks, attempting to draw them out, camped nearby.[162] Their presence prevented the arrival of further soldiers and also prevented Hunyadi and his men from linking up with the other gathering contingents.

Unwilling to undertake an assault on Alba Iulia, Mezid Bey broke camp and headed west. Hunyadi, hoping to link up with the various forces, most likely at his castle in Hunedoara, left Alba Iulia along the same route as the Turks. Mezid Bey laid his trap. On March 18th, when Hunyadi and the bishop "incautiously reached the village of St. Emeric,[163] suddenly all of the surrounding valleys discharged large throngs of the enemy who were lying concealed and waiting only for the arrival of the lord voivode."[164] Hunyadi escaped, but Bishop Lepes was not so lucky. Having fallen from his horse while racing across a small stream he was beheaded by the Turks. Mezid Bey seized a great deal of plunder and prisoners, which he set aside as a gift for the sultan. Hunyadi most likely fled to his nearby castle. It was here that he finally would have joined with the other elements of the Transylvanian army. Mezid Bey marched further to the Iron Gates, confident that he had cleared the area of any organized resistance. He released the akinji to raid and pillage, keeping a third of the force with him at camp, giving them a week or so to return.

Mezid Bey, overconfident after his earlier victory, paid no heed to warnings that enemy troops were gathering in the area, stating, "Let him come, and may he enrich us more than he has already."[165] Should the enemy attack, however, he ordered a contingent of his troops to focus on killing Hunyadi in the hope that this would cause the rest of the army to flee. At the same time a well-placed Hungarian spy in the Ottoman camp kept Hunyadi well apprised of the enemy's position and strength. He fur-

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[162] Thuróczy (p. 127) states that "A few days before this murderous rush of the Turkish army, Janos the voivode had come into Transylvania, and having visited the city of Alba... he was carefully considering what he should do about the enemy. For because of the unexpected arrival of so numerous a foe, an opportunity to assemble the troops was entirely denied him."

[163] This was not Saint Emeric (Santimbru/Szent-Imre) northeast of Alba Iulia but another town of the same name well known in the fifteenth century and located at the confluence of the Mureş and Strei rivers. For a lengthy discussion of the locations of these battles and the relevant source material see my article, "The Ottoman-Hungarian Campaigns of 1442."

[164] Thuróczy, p. 127

[165] Ibid., p. 128.

ther warned the voivode of the Ottoman plan to focus on killing his person, and Hunyadi therefore traded his armor with one of his *familiares*, Simon Kamonya, in order to foil the plan. Taking advantage of the enemy's weakened strength Hunyadi went on the offensive. At dawn on March 22nd the combined Transylvanian and Wallachian force burst out of the hillsides surrounding the pass, taking the Ottoman camp, "where there was neither watch nor guard," completely by surprise. One contingent attacked the Ottoman right flank, one the left, and the third rode directly at the center. As expected, a large group of enemy soldiers rushed towards Kamonya, thinking him to be the voivode, yet Hunyadi was elsewhere on the battlefield and the Ottomans were duped. The element of surprise was pivotal. "Caught unawares, the Turks were quickly routed and killed. The fugitives, however, set out for the Danube, where some escaped and others drowned." During the battle the prisoners who had been seized at St. Emeric, seeing the tide turn against the Turks, began work on freeing themselves lest they be slaughtered by the enemy in defeat, "and they labored with great energy to defend themselves,"[166] eventually turning and fighting against their erstwhile captors. The Ottoman army broke, turned and fled. Mezid Bey and his son were both killed along with numerous other "martyrs."

Hunyadi's victory did not end there. He developed a plan to wipe out the remainder of the Turkish raiders who were out pillaging and had not yet returned. Familiar with Turkish tactics,[167] he knew the raiders were to reassemble at Mezid Bey's camp by a specific date.[168] If they should discover that the camp had been routed, they would scatter and flee the

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[166] Ibid., pp. 129–130. This should be seen in the light of Mihalović's description of akinji tactics: "Then, having seen that they will not be able to win the battle, they order the captives whom they have taken, young and old, to be killed one after the other, and they take flight like the wind."

[167] It is not certain how he acquired this familiarity. Some historians claim that he served for a while in the entourage of George Branković, therefore fighting alongside the Turks when the latter was summoned to take part in the sultan's campaigns. According to Oruç Bey (p. 62): "He (Hunyadi) used to be in Ali Bey Evrenosoğlu's entourage. He knew both the Turks' strategies and tactics (آلینی فعلینی). Something happened in Ali Bey's entourage. He left and went to Hungary. He became one of the King's men; he became a beylerbey." Hunyadi may simply have learned Turkish tactics from his own experiences. The raid in 1438 passed right by Hunyadi castle, and his family's lands were no doubt affected by the Turkish raiders on other occasions as well. We have mentioned his defense of the southern border since Wladislas' accession to the throne, and how that brought him into frequent contact with akinji.

[168] See notes above containing Mihalović's description of akinji tactics.

country by other means. Hunyadi would lose an opportunity to deal a blow to the akinjis, as well as allow them to abscond with the plunder and slaves they had acquired through pillage. He therefore "sent spies to Transylvania and Wallachia to find out when the Saracen raiders were returning, and received the report that the ones who had been sent to Transylvania were on their way back."[169] As they were drawing near to the Iron Gate, he "hid a large contingent of their men along the Turks' path, but allowed them nevertheless to pass beyond this ambush. The Turks were heavily laden with booty, and were bringing with them a great crowd of men and women whom they had captured as slaves, together with a great number of animals." To keep the Turks from realizing that Mezid Bey had been routed he dressed up some of his men in the uniforms of the dead Turkish soldiers. Wavrin describes what took place next:

> Knowing nothing of the rout at the camp, the Turks arrived there in great joy and great triumph, drumming and shouting as if they had conquered the entire country. But the Vlachs[170] who were in the camp dressed up as Turks soon made them forget their joy, as they attacked them, while the men from the ambush surrounded them. The Vlachs did the same to the ones (akinji) who had gone to harry Wallachia.[171] The rout was so overwhelming that, out of a hundred thousand Turks, more than sixty thousand died. The Vlachs acquired enormous riches and treasures."[172]

Hunyadi's triumph, both over Mezid Bey and his raiders, was total.

Şehabeddin's Defeat

Hunyadi moved quickly to take advantage of his victory over the Turks and reassert Hungarian influence in Wallachia. He removed Mircea as voivode and handed his position to the Hungarian protegé Basarab II, of

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[169] This episode is described in detail in Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 109). Chalkokondyles makes mention of an ambush after the battle as well.

[170] Vlachs could refer to either men from Transylvania or from Wallachia. Wavrin uses it generally when referring to Hunyadi's army.

[171] Wavrin had previously written that Mezid Bey had sent one group of raiders to raid Transylvania, and the other to raid "Great Wallachia, which is downstream along the Danube." If this were indeed the case, then it is hard to believe that these raiders passed through Transylvania on their return, where Hunyadi's defeat of Mezid Bey took place (whether one maintains the defeat took place at the Iron Gates or not, it was certainly somewhere in north-central Transylvania). It is more likely that Wavrin, just as with the term "Vlachs" (see above note), had an equally vague grasp of the term "Wallachia."

[172] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 109).

the Danulesti dynasty. News of this along with the dramatic defeat of Mezid Bey caused upheaval in the Ottoman court. Mezid Bey's army had been sizeable, and the way in which the akinji had been herded and slaughtered after the marcher lord's death was a sure sign that they faced a clever and energetic adversary. Hunyadi's victory had also resulted in the loss of Ottoman suzerainty over Wallachia. For Halil Pasha and other opponents of rapid expansion this was a clear sign that the Ottomans were over-reaching. If they continued to pursue an expansionist policy further defeats and eventual disaster would follow. Şehabeddin seems to have argued the opposite, that the policy was not aggressive enough, and he petitioned the sultan to grant him an even larger force, comprised not only of raiders and timariot cavalry, but of Slaves of the Porte as well. The inclusion of the latter gives us a clue as to how Şehabeddin may have excused away Mezid Bey's defeat. As mentioned in chapter two there was a clear rivalry in the mid-fifteenth century between the marcher lords on the frontier and the Slaves of the Porte. Şehabeddin, whose policy was challenged by Mezid Bey's defeat, likely dismissed it as the fumblings of a provincial. A Slave of the Porte could do better, as he himself volunteered to demonstrate.[173]

By virtue of his positions as the Beylerbey of Rumelia and Ottoman vezir Şehabeddin was able to command far greater military resources than Mezid Bey. Aside from the akinji, who numbered well over 10,000 cavalrymen, he gathered a total of sixteen sanjak beys, a little over half the available Ottoman force of provincial cavalry. He also brought along between two and four thousand janissaries.[174] The janissaries, who could not be sent out as raiders, were intended along with the provincial cavalry to protect his camp and guard him from a fate similar to that of Mezid

[173] It may be that the sultan himself, as Chalkokondyles reports, had intended to conduct the raid, but instead delegated the mission to Şehabeddin on account of his continuing illness. According to Sadeddin (p. 205), the sultan was "resting" at the time of the battle in Sophia, a place where we almost never hear of the sultan residing, but which was well-known at the time for its healing hot-springs and baths. His presence there is also confirmed by Murad's Annals (Menage, p. 577).

[174] Chalkokondyles writes that a total of 4,000 janissaries marched with Şehabeddin. According to Murad's Annals (Menage, p. 577) there were 3,000 janissaries present as well as 16 Sanjak Beys. According to Oruç Bey (p. 62) there were 2,000 Janissaries and 15,000 akinji. Aşıkpaşazâde (p. 139) writes that Şehabeddin took the forces of Rumelia, some of the forces of Anatolia, and the akinji. Both Oruç Bey and the Annals of Murad II say that 16 Sanjak Beys took part. Sadeddin (p. 205) breaks this down into six from Anatolia and therefore ten from Rumelia, thus confirming Aşıkpaşazâde's statement that some from the Army of Anatolia took part.

Bey. The size of this force and the priority given to this raid is even more apparent when one considers that the Ottomans, along with Demetrios Palaeologus, were still besieging Constantinople in the summer of 1442 as well as raiding in Western Hungary. This large army took several months to gather,[175] and Şehabeddin was unable to set out until the end of summer.

The Turks had been conducting raids on the Banate of Slavonia, or what is now northeastern Croatia, since at least mid-April. Ujlaki and in particular the Thallocis had been defending the southwest border of the kingdom while Hunyadi was fighting in the southeast. Along the Sava, Srebernik had put up a staunch defense thanks to Franko Thalloci, who in the last minute re-supplied the fortress and shored up the fortifications. After his defense of the fortress Franko was betrayed by some locals and handed over to the Ottomans. His brother Matthew had been forced to summon all the noblemen and commoners of Slavonia to defend the banate against the Turks in April.[176] With the capture of his brother and the devastation of the banate Matthew hoped to mediate a peace settlement between Wladislas and the Turks.[177] In August, while the Royal Diet was in session in Buda to discuss the peace treaty with Elizabeth, Matthew sent an emissary to Murad. Given the desperate situation in Slavonia, the capture of his brother, the Turkish army gathering in the east and the lack of resolution in the ongoing civil war, Matthew gave the impression that the Hungarians might even be willing to hand over Belgrade or pay a substantial tribute to the Ottomans in exchange for peace.[178] In late August

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[175] The Venetians mention in a letter written 30 June, that they are assigning extra escorts for their galleys on account of "alarming news received on the subject of Turkish armament." Thiriet, *Regestes*, vol. III, nr. 94.

[176] See Levéltári Közlemények, vol. 16, pp. 129–130. The document is dated 28 April: "Magnificus vir Mathko de Tollowch regnorum Sclavonie, Croacie, Dalmacieque banus cum omnibus nobilibus regni Sclavonie et toto communi populo processerat contra rabiem perfidissimorum crucis Christi persecutorum puta Turcorum, qui protunc Sclavoniam irruerant."

[177] Dąbrowski, pp. 104–105. Długosz, p. 278. The June date given in Długosz for the arrival of this delegation is false, as Dąbrowski points out.

[178] Dąbrowski, p. 105, relying on Manuscript M.O.D.L. 34715, says this was Gaspar Thalloci. Długosz simply states: "Practicaverat enim Mathkone predictus per intermedias personas, ut Turcus cum Regno Hungarie aut pacem perpetuam aut inducias firmaret, dabatque Mathko Turcorum cesari non incertam spem, quo in premium pacis firmande castrum Albanander supra Savam situm vel aliquod tributum a Regno Hungarie esset habiturus." Długosz himself does not fault Matthew Thalloci for attempting to deal with the Ottomans, saying that he was a prudent and capable man, but perhaps disheartened by the extensive problems facing the kingdom.

or early September 1442, an Ottoman emissary arrived at the court to discuss the possibility of a treaty with the king. He no doubt mentioned that Şehabeddin had gathered a grand army, and was on the march prepared to fully avenge Mezid Bey's earlier defeat.

At around the same time that the Ottoman emissary was headed for Buda Şehabeddin was making his way through Wallachia. His purpose was to punish their infidelity, safeguard their allegiance to the Ottomans, and make an impressive show of force that would turn negotiations with the Hungarians in Buda in their favor.[179] Şehabeddin led his troops into the Wallachian capital of Târgoviște. After seizing and burning the city, removing Basarab II and ensuring the submission and allegiance of Mircea II, Şehabeddin left the city and set up camp.[180] He then released the raiders to plunder Wallachia and perhaps parts of Transylvnia as well. In the meantime Hunyadi, who had been informed ahead of time of the coming assault, had already made preparations. Either on the voivode's orders, or simply of their own accord, the Wallachians "withdrew their people to the mountains,[181] and abandoned the plain in its entirety... The Vlachs had taken very good care that the Turks would not find any food in their country, and they knew well that they would never attack them in the mountains."[182] For over a week they waited in the hills while the Turks ravaged and plundered the neighboring countryside. Hunyadi no doubt hoped he could take advantage of the pasha's weakened position, as he had with Mezid Bey. Yet it was for this reason in particular that Şehabeddin had brought with him the provincial cavalry and the janissaries. They would have dug a fortified position every night around the pasha's camp, complete with stakes, trenches and a ring of camels.[183] For

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[179] Some of the Christian sources say that he also intended to conquer Transylvania, and sent raiders there as well. There is no independent evidence that raids were conducted in Transylvania that year, though some later chroniclers mention it. Wladislas' letter mentions the Ottoman's "intent" to do so. Wavrin implies that the Ottomans only raided the borders of Transylvania. Perhaps Şehabeddin had been ordered not to send raiders deep into Transylvania due to the negotiations in Buda, for fear that they would not be able to stop the raiding if a peace treaty were signed.

[180] For details regarding the sources for this battle and questions of location, see "The Ottoman-Hungarian Campaigns of 1442."

[181] An important corroborating source for these events is the letter of Bartolomeo di Giano from February, 1444, found in *Anchiennes Chroniques d'Angleterre*, pp. 1–11. The letter is falsely dated (February 1442) as it reports events up to and including Şehabeddin's defeat, which took place in September of 1442. He also states that Hunyadi's men had withdrawn to the mountains.

[182] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 110)

[183] For more details see chapter four.

this reason, as Wavrin tells us, Hunyadi was unable to attack the pasha's position.[184]

Approximately a week after releasing the akinji the last of the raiders arrived. Şehabeddin raised camp and headed south towards the border. It was at this point that Hunyadi pursued the Ottomans from a safe distance, not revealing his strength, waiting patienly for an opportunity. This patience paid off. Şehabeddin, as the Ottoman sources tell us, became overconfident just as Mezid Bey had and was unaware of the size and proximity of the Hungarian army pursuing him. He chose to begin disembarking his troops across the river into Ottoman territory. There were no bridges over the Danube, and as Wavrin writes the men were forced to cross in boats, having their horses swim. Given the amount of plunder and the large size of the army, the crossing would have been a slow and laborious process. Şehabeddin's lack of caution seems therefore all the more egregious. When a large portion of the army had already crossed, Hunyadi decided it was time to initiate the attack. At around 9am on the morning of September 2nd Hunyadi unleashed his forces on the pasha and the remainder of his army still camped on the north side of the Danube.

The battle with these men, who despite their diminished numbers still represented a formidable force, lasted into the night. At this point the pasha decided he had lost, and notwithstanding the entreaties of the sanjak beys to remain and fight, he fled over the Danube under cover of darkness. With the pasha and his men taking priority, the timariot cavalry under the command of the Sanjak Beys were exposed longest to enemy attacks on the far side, which continued during the night as the soldiers tried to cross. All of the accounts focus on this group of soldiers as bearing the most casualties. Some Ottoman sources state all sixteen sanjak beys were killed, equalling the loss of around half of the sanjak beys in the empire. The morning sun revealed a field strewn with Ottoman dead.[185] Yet as several sources state, as many died in the waters of the Danube as on the field of battle. The plunder seized was enormous. In his haste to retreat Şehabeddin had left the majority of his camp possessions, to include "5,000 camels and innumerable horses." Hunyadi's defeat against

[184] Oruç Bey, p. 63. Wavrin, p. 110.

[185] According to a marginal note from a chronicle in Messembria, the Ottomans lost 28,000 troops at this battle (*Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, ed. and trans. by Peter Schreiner, vol. 1, chronicle 29, entry 14, p. 216).

Şehabeddin and a large portion of the Ottoman army constituted this talented general's greatest battlefield victory, second only to the 1456 defense of Belgrade in terms of his greatest military accomplishment.

At the time of Hunyadi's victory, negotiations were still taking place in Buda for a possible Ottoman-Hungarian peace.[186] The king received the Turkish emissary in a grand audience, with "Cardinal Cesarini at his side, as well as the prelates and barons of both kingdoms." The emissary explained that his lord the sultan "was predisposed toward peace, and that if Wladislas would yield Belgrade to the sultan or pay a tribute in certain years, he would affirm a permanent peace or one that would endure as long as Wladislas should desire." Both the king and the Royal Diet refused the conditions. "The Turk, unaware of future or even recently-occurring events, stated that peace brought at the price of one fortress (Belgrade) was a bargain. [Otherwise] they would seize many more castles, lands and dominions before two more years should pass."[187] These threatening words were premature. Soon after the ambassador's audience with the king news of Şehabeddin's defeat reached the court at Buda. With the bargaining positions now reversed, the Turkish emissary had no option other than to leave the Hungarian capital and report that peace with the Hungarians was no longer a possibility. The Ottomans must gird themselves for war.

Hunyadi did not rest on his laurels after his victory over Şehabeddin. At Wladislas' behest and with royal reinforcements[188] he crossed over into Bulgaria and laid waste to the border town of Vidin, likely burning the ships that had been used to ferry Ottoman troops as well as pillaging the estates of the akinji and marcher lords. He then continued to head westward in order to join forces with Ujlaki and the Thallocis, whose territory was still threatened by raiders. Upon arriving in southwestern Hungary Hunyadi and his men conducted further military actions in Ottoman territory near Belgrade, exacting vengeance for Ottoman raids in Slavonia earlier that year.[189]

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[186] Długosz, pp. 278–79.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Dąbrowski (p. 104) points out that these were probably made available by the truce with Elizabeth.

[189] I use as my source the text mentioned above. Dąbrowski contends, based on a letter received from the Venetians via Ragusa and mentioned in Jorga (*Notes et extraits*, vol. III, p. 106), that Hunyadi fought another major battle against Turahan Bey, who had crossed the Sava with 15,000 men. The same excerpt mentions that the said person is the Governor of Wallachia (Blachya) by the sea, and then supposes that the reference is to

The successes of Hunyadi in 1442 were celebrated throughout Europe, in particular his victory over Şehabeddin in September. This was the first time in living memory that a European army had defeated such a large Ottoman force, composed not only of raiders, but of the provincial cavalry led by their own sanjak beys and accompanied by the formidable janissaries. The pope was ecstatic, and even members of the conciliar party showed their joy.[190] The Venetians ordered a celebratory procession with the participation of the doge and the other city dignitaries to honor the victory.[191] The Florentines, not to be outdone, ordered their own celebrations. After hearing the news about the the Ottoman defeat the Duke of Burgundy ordered a crusade sermon be read to him by his confessor, followed by a procession in the Burgundian capital of Dijon.[192] The praise was deserved, for Hunyadi had waged a brilliant series of campaigns. Through extensive use of reconnaissance and intelligence, advanced strategic planning, and swift and sudden action he was able to wage complex operations and force the enemy to fight on terms most favorable to his army. In short, he beat the Turks at their own game. This was not only true in a tactical sense, but in a strategic one as well. Ever since 1441, he had adopted the Turkish policy of punishing every incursion with an equal or greater reprisal. He now began to see the benefits of this policy.

The Turks, upon hearing of the defeat and the significant losses of men decided to lift their siege of Constantinople.[193] The victory over Şehabeddin resulted in more than just high casualties and a loss of morale. For the Ottomans, military victory in offensive operations was not only an end of warfare, it provided the means to wage further campaigns. Victory had

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Turahan Bey. The letter seems instead to refer to Mezid Bey, who was the Marcher Lord of Nicopolis. According to Wavrin this march extended to the sea. The excerpt also mentions that both the captain of the army and his son were killed. Again, neither is true in the case of Turahan, but both are true for Mezid Bey and his defeat at the Iron Gate. Furthermore, there is no mention in Wladislas' letter from 1443, or from the later letter of Ladislaus in 1453 of a major engagement on the Sava. They only mention that Hunyadi conducted raids there, probably on the scale of what occurred against Ishak Bey in 1441.

[190] For a brief desciption of the international response to these victories see Andrzej Grabski, *Polska w opiniach Europy Zachodniej XIV-XV w.* (Warsaw: PWN, 1968), p. 394.

[191] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. III, pp. 105–106.

[192] Paviot, *Les Ducs*, p. 93.

[193] Venetian letter to the Duke of Burgundy, dated 2 January 1443: "unde propter hanc adversam Teucrorum fortunam et cladem eorum exercitus qui ad obsidionem Constantinopolis dudum steterat repente discessit, et evanuit." August Cieszkowski, ed., *Fontes rerum polonicarum e tabulario reipublicae venetae*, series 1, part 2 (Poznań: Dziennik Poznański, 1902).

the very material benefit of enriching the victors. Plunder was the main source of an akinji raider's income, and captives seized provided money for the captors as well as recruits for the Porte's slave army. This created a motive to fight in coming campaigns, and provided the means to furnish better-equipped and larger armies in the future. Hunyadi reversed this dynamic. Over the next two years, the Turks would be forced to wage defensive campaigns at great expense to the empire. The Christian threat would cause the enemies of the Porte, Muslim and Christian, to consider the possibility that the seemingly indomitable Ottoman Empire might indeed be vanquished. This emboldened many to revolt. Signs of this change came swiftly. In early 1443, Ibrahim Bey of Karaman, having heard of Şehabeddin's defeat,[194] took up arms once again against the sultan, seizing the cities of Akşehir and Yenişehir that Murad had taken from him in 1437 (see next chapter).

All of this, of course, was precisely what Halil Pasha had warned against. In the summer of 1442, even after the victory over Mezid Bey, the Hungarians had been considering the possibility of peace with the Ottomans, even if it meant handing over Belgrade. From the Ottoman side, these negotiations were almost certainly undertaken at the behest of Halil Pasha. The negotiations foundered with the defeat of Şehabeddin, which removed any bargaining leverage the Porte had had as well as any prospects of obtaining Belgrade by either diplomatic or military means. Şehabeddin, disgraced, was stripped of the office of beylerbey and replaced with Kasım Pasha.[195] Yet he remained on the divan as vezir along with Fazlullah, where he was still able to play a role in the battles in the coming year and somewhat rehabilitate his reputation.

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[194] Aşıkpaşazâde himself is explicit that Ibrahim Bey revolted as a result of the Christian victory.

[195] İnalcik states that Kasım Pasha was allied with Halil Pasha (İnalcik, *Fatih Devri*, p. 85). For more on Kasım Pasha see İnalcik's footnote nr. 14 in the Gazavât, pp. 93–94.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LONG MARCH

The Church and the Crusade—1443

Eugene IV, who was in close contact with Cardinal Cesarini, followed with great interest the negotiations for an end to the civil war and the dramatic string of victories won by Hunyadi in 1442. As we have seen, the peace treaty signed in December was in practice nullified by Elizabeth's death. But the fact that the hostilities had officially ended seemed to be all Eugene IV needed. He began preparations for a full anti-Ottoman expedition. On January 1, he promulgated a Bull[1] announcing the crusade. It deserves to be looked at in detail, for it is the clearest expression of Eugene IV's vision of the Turkish problem, how it related to the faithful and the papacy and how it was to be solved.

He begins by describing the union, which by 1443 had grown to encompass the Armenians, Ruthenians, Coptic Egyptians, Lebanese Maronites and a number of others. Eugene emphasizes the re-united status of the Balkan peoples in order to remind his audience that these are no longer schismatics, but fully part of Christendom, and therefore deserving of sympathy and assistance. After expressing his joy over the union he goes on to say that such joy turns bitter when one considers the misery, enslavement, death and bondage to which the Eastern Christians are continually subject. He refers to the Turks as a plague spreading from Asia into Europe, its most recent victim being the Depot Branković, who lost not only his lands but his two sons, and whose subjects were taken into "unholy slavery" by the hundreds of thousands.[2] He portrays the cruel predations of the Ottoman raiders. They appear suddenly, arriving before the faithful can prepare themselves, and then seize captives "of both sexes who are bound by a rope, and those worn out on account of illness or old age or simply unused to long journeys. These are either killed or mortally wounded in the open fields or even in the middle of

[1] Hoffmann, *Epistolae pontificae*, nr. 261, pp. 68–75.

[2] Curiously, alongisde the 200,000 souls the Turks seized, the pope mentions the silver mines at Novo Brdo, an indication of their immense economic significance which was known even in Italy.

Christian cities through which they are passing." The cadavers are left to vermin or simply to rot. Hungary, which has been troubled by civil war for some time, has been particularly affected. A number of Hungarian Christians have been sold as brute animals such that father is torn from son and wife from husband. On top of the seizure of slaves by the akinji Eugene laments the practice of the devshirme, which steals sons from their mothers' arms.[3] On a positive note, the pope mentions the recent and glorious victories of Hunyadi over the Turks in September. But then he continues to remark upon the lamentable situation in all of Christendom, the cause of which is the mutual discord and fighting among Christians themselves. Anyone who could turn a blind eye to these sufferings and calamities "has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."[4]

"The solution to these problems," Eugene writes, "is a great assault against the infidels." Immediately following this statement he adds that success in this enterprise depends on the recognition of papal authority and the removal of certain obstacles, a clear reference not only to the civil war in Hungary but to the council, in an attempt to portray them as a hindrance to the holy expedition:

> Especially if all would pay homage to the Apostolic See and to us [Eugene IV] the undeserving Vicar of Christ. Then, having established with our authority and power a stable and lasting peace among the Christian faithful, we might prepare to turn our forces and those of the Catholic princes and others among the faithful against the pride and rapine of the infidel. This we desire, since the continually growing impediments which are preventing the occurrence of this our pious wish torture us so much, that our spirit is vexed by severe worry and bitterness.[5]

To solve some of the issues Eugene mentions that he has dispatched Cesarini as legate to Hungary and Poland, and Christophoro Gastrioni as legate to the lands surrounding Hungary, that they might facilitate the coming expedition.

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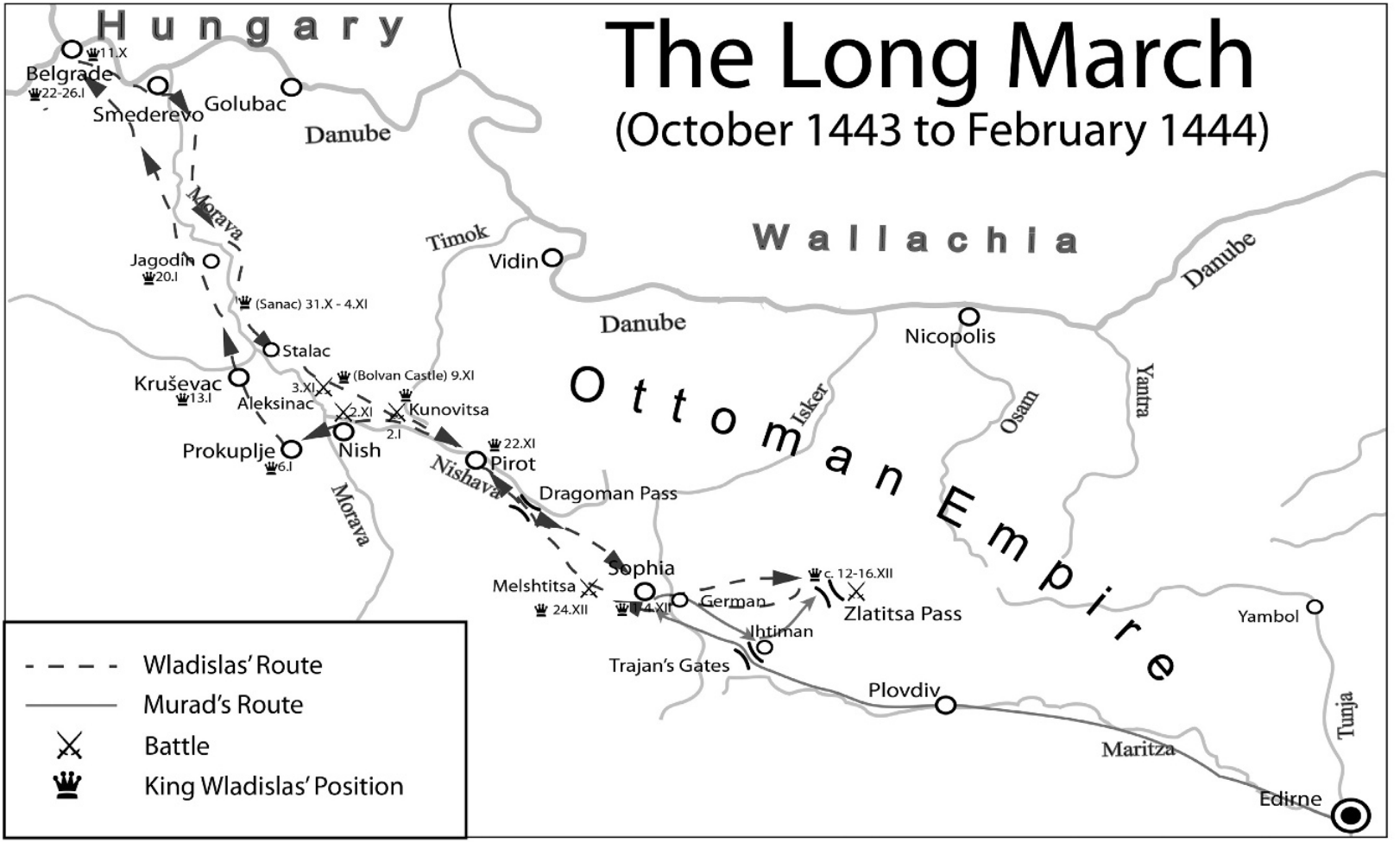
[3] The passage is interesting for it shows that the devshirme at the time of Murad was conducted at "determined and set" times: "determinatis namque statutis temporibus ad omnes christianorum provincias sua sub servitute degentium exactores quosdam transmittit, et ex singulis christianorum familiis unum saltem adolescentem baptizatum et Christo dedicatum, qui ad militarem disciplinam ideonus videatur et ad impii Machometti sectam de sinu manibusque lachrimantium matrum extorquent atque rapiunt." (Hoffmann, ut supra).

[4] Holy Bible, New Testament, 1 Tim 8.

[5] Hoffmann, ut supra.



Map 4. The Long March.

Eugene then attempts to describe the urgency of the current situation. He mentions Jacob de Bononia, who had been sent by John VIII in August to plead for assistance from the pope and Venice. This friar related to Eugene the plight of the beleaguered city which he feared might fall at any moment. Soon after hearing from Jacob Eugene received letters from John, King of Cyprus, describing the growing threats to that kingdom from the Mameluke Sultan in Egypt. Specifically, he warned, the sultan is preparing a grand fleet, that is to attack Cyprus and Rhodes in the following year and subject both islands to Islamic rule. In addition Theodore Palaeologus wrote from the Morea that the despotate there was facing imminent threat of conquest. Eugene once again presents the solution. The way to overcome these threats is a crusade. He goes on to make an interesting appeal to the solidarity of Christians and to some extent the solidarity of all mankind. Such an appeal is only now possible since the union of the two churches. "Those who suffer such burdens and calamities are like us. They are formed of the same clay, compacted of the same elements, and, what is most important, joined by the same faith and religion to us. What they suffer we might too suffer."[6]

The Bull now moves to practical affairs. Eugene states that the cost of putting together the land and maritime expeditions envisioned for the crusade is enormous. The papal treasury has been drained by the costs of the various unions, costs which the papacy itself bore. In short, the treasury is empty. Funds must come from elsewhere. It is only fitting that the Church itself should be the first to bear the costs of the expedition, and for this reason he announces the collection of a tenth from all churches, monasteries, benefices and institutions possessing church benefices. The funds are to be collected from all prelates, ecclesiastical and secular persons and regulars, exempt and non-exempt, for one year beginning on Easter Sunday (21 April 1443) and continuing even longer, perhaps until the feast of John the Baptist (June 24 1444). The faithful are encouraged to give more if they would like, and indeed the pope is setting the example by declaring one-fifth of the income from services and annates to be designated for the expedition. These funds will be used to finance the crusader fleet and army.

Having officially announced the crusade the papacy began organizing the expedition. Responsibility for the land operation was handed over to Cesarini. The curia focused on the naval component and set about put-

[6] Ibid.

ting together a fleet. The papacy's original plan for the crusader ships was to have them wage offensive missions under the command of the Byzantines against the Turks.[7] By 1442 his thinking had changed, and the mission of the fleet was simply to blockade the straits. The papacy was not the first to propose this strategy. In 1429, while the Venetians were at war with the Ottomans over Thessaloniki, they sent an ambassador to Ibrahim Bey of Karaman to inform him of a plan to block the straits from April until November and thereby divide the Ottoman army.[8] At the time, they said ten ships and a 2,000 ton cog would be sufficient for the purpose. Fourteen years later, in 1443, they recommended 16–20 vessels for the purpose, with 20 ensuring the success of the enterprise.[9]

In building this fleet, the pope had found an unlikely ally in Philip II, Duke of Burgundy. The duke's willingness to support the crusade is at first glance puzzling. The rulers of Hungary, Venice, Ragusa, Byzantium, Wallachia, Serbia, etc. all had a direct strategic and political interest in driving the Turks from the Balkans. The Burgundians did not. The Ottomans in no way threatened Burgundy proper and only indirectly affected their trade interests in the Mediterranean. Yet Philip had his own reasons for participating in an anti-Turkish expedition. On the one hand, Duke Philip had his eye on a royal crown. The Hundred Years War was ongoing, and the Duke of Burgundy, allied with the English against the French monarch, remained despite his wealth and power the nominal subject of his enemy the French king. By making significant contributions to the crusade, Philip could endear himself to the papacy, the only authority able to legitimize a Burgundian crown. Yet it is impossible to explain away Philip's interest as mere political calculation. Indeed, his active participation is the clearest example that the ideals of Crusading, which held such a powerful hold on the medieval imagination in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were still current. Philip's interest was due in large part to his family's participation in that tradition. The legendary crusader King Baldwin had ruled in the lands that Philip now ruled. Philip's own father, John the Fearless, had been taken captive by the Turks at Nicopolis less than fifty years prior. The Burgundians saw themselves, and were seen by

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[7] See chapter three, specifically Eugene's letter to his two nuncios from 10 Jan 1440, found in *Deutsche Reichtagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III* (*1440–1441*), nr. 114, pp. 200–201.

[8] Thiriet, *Régestes*, p. 266.

[9] Jorga, Notes et extraits, vol. 3, letter from April 13, pp. 121–122, from May 3, pp. 122–123 and from 10 May, pp. 125–126 and 13 May, pp. 126–127.

others, as the standard-bearers of the crusade movement in Western Europe.

Philip wished to uphold this image, and would remain throughout his life constantly involved in various crusade projects. The vast majority of these were more theoretical than actual. We have already mentioned the mission of Brocquière, who had been sent by Philip to investigate the Holy Land and the Balkans with an eye to an eventual expedition. A similar mission had preceded this some years earlier. The crusade was an ideal which Philip nurtured throughout his life.[10] His sentiments were duly encouraged by members of the Church. Burgundy's representative at Ferrara/Florence, the Cardinal of Thérouanne, also known as John the Young, was a fervent supporter of the crusade and of the duke's participation. John had been actively involved in the negotiations for union, and was rewarded by Eugene with a cardinal's hat. He chose to stay on at the Papal court, serving among other things as a liaison between the curia and the duke.[11] In 1441 Thérouanne may have played a role in Philip's decision to send ships to the aid of Cyprus, at that time under threat from the Mamelukes.[12] This decision also resulted from the duke's dynastic connections to Cyprus and the fact that a Cypriot lobbyist had been present at the Burgundian court in the late 1430s. In any case, the Cyprus expedition indicated that the duke had both the means and the will to contribute to the crusade. The Cypriots were not the only ones to lobby at the duke's court. In the autumn of 1442 the papacy sent the most famous Franciscan preacher of the fifteenth century, John of Capistrano, to further the pope's agenda at the duke's court. His mission was to ensure Philip's obedience to Eugene IV and to obtain his support for the crusade. He remained with Philip at least until early 1443, and was present for the celebration of Hunyadi's 1442 victory over the Turks. A fervent supporter

[10] Pero Tafur, visiting the Duke in 1438, remarked (Tafur, p. 195) : "While I was there the Duke sent for me many times, and enquired as to the places I had visited, and by repeated questions desired to be exactly informed concerning all that I had seen and done. He showed great pleasure at what I told him, giving me to understand the longing which he had to make the conquest of Jerusalem; at least so it appeared to me from his enquiries." On Pero Tafur's trip from Brussels to Bruges he was escorted by Ghilbert Lannoy, author of another famous travel chronicle to the near east earlier in the century. One can only imagine what they discussed.

[11] For information on Thérouanne, see Paviot, *Les Ducs*, pp. 92–93. This book is by far the best source for information on Philipp II's involvement in the crusades and I rely on it extensively here.

[12] For more information on this expedition, led by Geoffrey de Thoisy, see Paviot, *Les Ducs*, pp. 89–91.

of the crusade and a gifted speaker, Capistrano tried his best to encourage the duke in his crusading inclinations.

Succumbing to these influences Philip seems to have approached Venice sometime in 1442 about the possibility of building warships in the Venetian arsenal at the duke's expense. This is suggested in a letter the Venetians themselves wrote to the duke in January of 1443, in which they state their willingness to help the Burgundians in this project.[13] Throughout the spring, and particularly in the month of May, there were concerted negotiations between the Venetians and the Burgundians involving Cardinal Thérouanne, the Venetian ambassador to the Holy See, Vernier, and even the duke himself. The Burgundians wanted to stay informed about the progress of the proposed papal fleet and the expedition.

Earlier, in 1440, Venice had written that "with the passage of time things might develop such that we could do these things for the salvation of Christendom which you request and which we have done in the past."[14] Hunyadi's victories in 1442 were the sort of "developments" the Venetians had in mind. Just after the victory, the Venetians allotted eight vessels to free Constantine Palaeologus who had been blockaded in the Morea by Turkish ships and escort him to Constantinople. This could only provoke the Turks, and is an indication that the Venetians were taking a more antagonistic stance. The effects of Şehabeddin's defeat were immediately felt in Constantinople when the Turks, upon hearing the news, lifted the siege.[15] Merchant traffic once again flowed unimpeded. The papacy's Crusading Bull and the fervent solicitation of European powers assured Venice that Eugene IV was serious about a coming expedition. But the Republic still had some unresolved issues with the pope, among them the outstanding debt Eugene had incurred from the Republic during the negotiations for union. The Venetians also wanted the pope to intervene on their behalf in the wars taking place within Italy involving Milan, Alfonso V of Aragon, Florence and Venice.[16] The Venetians wrote in the spring of 1443 that if these issues were resolved, they would contribute to

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[13] Letter from the Venetian Senate to the Duke of Burgundy from 2 January, 1443. It bears a mistake in the year, which is listed as January 1442 but since the letter refers to Hunyadi's victory over Şehabeddin the year must be mistaken (*Fontes rerum polonicarum*, pp. 62–64).

[14] Theiner, p. 134.

[15] Sanudo, *Le Vite dei Dogi*, p. 368.

[16] For a brief summary of this extremely complicated conflict see Quirina-Popławska, "Republika Wenecka wobec akcji antytureckiej w latach 1440–1444," in *Świat Chrześcij-*

the pope's fleet, but only in a limited capacity and with certain guarantees. If the pope would arm and rig them, they would provide the hulls (*corpora gallearum*) for ten vessels. The pope was not to use the money collected from his planned tithe[17] of the Venetian clergy to pay for these ships, which would in effect amount to the Venetians paying for the vessels themselves. He was to use his own money.

The Venetians' apprehensions are understandable. They did not want to be left to shoulder the burden of the expedition on their own, for though they stood to gain a great deal, they stood to lose much as well. Their participation in the fleet constituted a clear violation of their peace treaty with the Ottomans, an agreement which had served them well since their defeat in 1430. A failed expedition meant a return of Turkish aggression and Venetian cities and trading posts along the littoral were an easy mark for large Ottoman land armies. The Venetians' greatest concern was therefore not who would contribute to the fleet, but whether and when the land operation would occur. Without a Hungarian overland expedition a crusader fleet was worse than useless, it was a threat to Venetian interests.

The Byzantines were also closely following the preparations, urging them along whenever possible. John VIII ordered another Byzantine emissary, Theodore Karystinos, to head west in May of 1443 to solicit support and win adherents to the crusade.[18] The emperor had likely heard that negotiations concerning the fleet were stalled, and he wanted to send someone to help the process along and to keep himself informed. John VIII had already negotiated a plan for a coordinated attack against the Ottomans involving Ibrahim Bey of Karaman, who had already taken up arms and begun to perform his role (see below).[19] The Ottomans

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ański i Turcy Osmańscy w dobie bitwy pod Warna (Krakow: Jagiellonian University, 1995), p. 116.

[17] Actually a *semidecima* or "twentieth." Such taxes were burdensome to the entire population, from whom the money ultimately derived.

[18] The purpose of Karystinos' mission is made clear in Cyriac of Ancona's report from 14 September, 1443 (Bodnar, p. 5) in which he writes that Karystinos had arrived in Ascoli Piceno just a few days prior in order to convince the King of Aragon, currently besieging the city, to contribute ships for the campaign. "He was also urged to the same end (crusade) by Theodore Charystenos of Byzantium, your distinguished emissary, who had arrived just a few days before from your royal city, providentially sent by you as your envoy on this very matter to the Venetians and the western leaders."

[19] Letter from Ragusa to Wladislas dated 13 May and found in Joseph Chmel, ed., *Materialien zur Österreichischen Geschichte*, vol. 1/2 (Vienna: Rohrmann, 1838), p. 114. See also below.

would soon be required to deal with the insurrection in Anatolia, and the Byzantines wanted to ensure that the fleet arrived in the summer both to protect Constantinople from Ottoman reprisals and most importantly to keep Murad from crossing back into Europe. In May Karystinos appeared in Venice under instructions from the Emperor to heed the Venetians' instructions and advice.[20] Addressing the senate, Karystinos emphasized that faced with insurrection the Ottoman position was precarious, and that they could be "driven from Greece with ease." This failed to move the Serenissima to action. If Karystinos were expecting to receive immediate assistance from the Venetians he was disappointed. Instead they blamed the papacy for the delay in the fleet construction, telling the Byzantine emissary that it was better to raise the issue with Eugene IV. They mentioned the necessity of first pacifying Italy as well.

After leaving Venice Karystinos followed the senate's advice and headed to Rome.[21] There he was exposed to the same finger pointing and prevarication that he had met with from the Venetians. Yet the curia was not wholly unresponsive. It was around this time that Eugene officially named Cardinal Francis Condulmer and Cardinal Cesarini as legates to "Greece", tasked respectively with organizing the maritime and land expeditions against the Turks.[22] Cesarini's expanded legation, which now included the Balkans, was important should he embark on a campaign to lands outside of the jurisdiction assigned in his original legation. It also ensured that he would maintain equal authority and responsibility and not be subordinated to Cardinal Condulmer, who now took on the task of organizing the fleet.[23]

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[20] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. III, pp. 122–123.

[21] Eugene's letter to John VIII dated 13 June, 1443 mentions the Byzantine legate's presence at the curia and his inquiries concerning the fleet. Hoffmann, *Epistolae pontificiae*, nr. 266, p. 84.

[22] These documents are found in Theiner, pp. 380–383.

[23] The division of tasks is stated more explicitly in Cesarini's letter (Theiner, pp. 382–383): "Per presentes autem litteras dilectum filium nostrum Franciscum tituli sancti Clementis presbiterum Cardinalem, sancte Romane ecclesie Vicecancellarium, quem per alias nostras litteras maritime classi contra Turcos traiiciende preficimus, et in natione et partibus predictis etiam de fratrum nostrorum consilio legatum cum omnimoda potestate deputaviumus, non intendimus revocare, nec sibi in aliquo derogari volumus per presentes, sed quam primum Cardinalis legatus Vicecancellarius predicuts, deo duce, ad partes predictas migraverit, volumus, ut ambo vos huiusmodi legationis officium ad dei honorem et floriam et fidei catholice incrementum... Et cum te in Hungarie, Polonie, Boemie, Dalmatie et Croatie et partibus ipsis Regnis subiectis ac de*pendentibus ab eisdem, necnon ad provinciam Salzeburgensem per alias nostras litteras*... [A reference to

Francis Condulmer's uncle was none other than Eugene IV, who had bestowed upon his nephew the office of cardinal in 1431. It is hard to gain any clear sense of Francis' influence over his uncle. But there is little doubt that he had a position of primacy within the curia. He was the first prelate to hold the office of Camerlengo, and as such he was responsible for the functioning of the curia. This, along with the fact that Francis would exercise command over the maritime expeditions in 1443/44 suggests that his role in the crusade has been much underestimated by historians. As Camerlengo Francis controlled the purse strings of the papacy, an important fact given the transactional and business-like approach the Venetians had taken in regards to the crusade fleet. As a Venetian Francis understood firsthand the Republic's politics, and his personal contacts in the city would be important in securing Venice's participation, a pre-requisite for the success of the planned maritime campaign. In his bull granting Cardinal Condulmer jurisdiction the pope mentions preparations this year for "a great army to exterminate the Turks and other infidels, in order to liberate the lord's flock. We are also trying as much as possible to put together a maritime fleet, so that with a land and sea force this holy work so dear to our heart might come to a happy and successful conclusion." The qualified language used to describe the fleet preparations shows that the papacy had its own doubts about the maritime expedition. To ease his difficult mission Eugene granted Francis Condulmer far-reaching powers to deal with foreign rulers, lay and ecclesiastical, and to grant crusade indulgences to anyone, including princes and kings, who might be willing to take part.

It is not certain whether Karystinos was present at the papal court when Eugene assigned these legations. In any case Karystinos followed the advice he had received in Venice and journeyed northward to meet with the Duke of Burgundy. He arrived at Philip's court sometime between late June and early July 1443.[24] The visit must have made quite an impression on the Burgundians, as nearly all the contemporary chroniclers mention it. Karystinos had come prepared with letters from the emperor himself addressing the duke "as a most Christian Prince, famous for his active desire to help the Christians against the infidels." The letter went on to relate the victories of the Hungarians and their intention to launch a land expedition into Greece, as well as the Hungarians' request

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the responsibilities Cesarini held and would still hold from his previously assigned legation.]"

[24] For a summary of this visit, see Paviot, *Les Ducs*, p. 97.

that "the Emperor of Constantinople do all that was within his power to defend the Straits of Constantinople, so that the Turks could not cross into Greece."[25] It is no wonder this made an impression on the duke. The renowned Emperor of Byzantium had sent an emissary to request assistance not from the King of France or the King of England, but from Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, pleading with him not only on his own behalf but also on behalf of the King of Hungary to assist against the enemies of Christendom. Yet the duke, like his contemporaries, was easily distracted from the problems of Christendom when local crises arose. In the second half of 1443 the duke was at war over the Duchy of Luxembourg. It would not be until the end of the year that he would come back to the project of the crusade. Karystinos traveled back to Italy, where he is seen in September trying to convince Alfonso V of Aragon to provide the necessary ships for the maritime expedition. This, too, proved fruitless.[26]

By the end of the summer of 1443 there seemed little chance that a fleet would assist the Hungarians, who were still preparing to undertake their part of the mission. At the beginning of July Frederick's chancellor, Kaspar Schlick, was able to write with more than a tinge of *schadenfreude*: "Yesterday our merchants came from Venice and they stated with absolute certainty that no galleys are being armed in Venice and the Venetians are making no provisions to arm any galleys."[27] The Venetians, in a letter dated August 8th, attempted to excuse themselves from any blame in the matter. The hulls were ready, they claimed, but they had received no money from the pope. The latter insisted on using the money he had raised from the tithe on the clergy to pay Venice, "which is to use funds alloted for one thing for something else."[28] Without the necessary financial support, the proposed fleet could not be assembled. In any case it was too late in the season, "Such time is elapsed, as we are now in the month

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[25] Wavrin, *Anchiennes Chroniques*, pp. 31–33. The French text contains valuable footnotes regarding other chronicle entries concerning Karystinos' visit which are not found in Imber's translation. The excerpt above, however, is taken from the translation (Imber's translation, pp. 115–116).

[26] See above-mentioned letter from Cyriac of Ancona. Alphonso seems to have offered up the rather lame excuse that the Venetians would not guarantee his ships safe passage (Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, p. 139).

[27] Wolkan, vol. II, p. 40.

[28] See above. Eugene expected the Venetians to collect the tithe and use that for the fleet. The Venetians argued that this was essentially the same as asking the Venetians to pay for the fleet themselves when they had already made great financial sacrifices for the union. They state in the letter that the tithe itself has yielded little due to "bad conditions."

of August... We do not see any hope for the armada. For this we are saddened, for we see the great peril that it will bring upon the Christian people."[29] There would be no crusader fleet in 1443 and no blockade of the straits.

Political Developments in Hungary

While Condulmer was busy putting together a fleet, Cesarini had the equally daunting task of maintaining the peace in Hungary and preparing the land invasion. In order to discuss these plans Wladislas summoned Ujlaki and Hunyadi to Buda in March 1443. With the participation of other important noblemen in the vicinity the meeting eventually became a full-fledged Royal Diet.[30] The assembly's first decree was that "an army will be raised in the coming summer for the defense of the kingdom." For this reason a general tax was to be collected throughout the realm, the details of which were given in letters dispatched to the various counties.[31] The diet's remaining decrees were an attempt to tackle local unrest, particularly the numerous land disputes resulting from years of civil war. The obvious desire of the king and his advisors to settle these disputes quickly and justly was directly related to the war effort. Hunyadi, Wladislas and the other nobles were aware that a number of noblemen would refuse to take part if they felt their contested lands would be threatened in their absence. Aside from their legislative content the decrees were a clear sign of Wladislas' growing authority within Hungary. This was a result of the largely dormant civil war, Hunyadi's string of victories in the previous year and the king's own maturity and growing independence. Wladislas readily admitted in the document that a number of his decrees regarding land donations were ignored in previous years, and they were part of the cause of the present disputes. Yet he now expected his orders to be followed fully, and laid out the penalties for those who would not comply. He also ordered the destruction by summer's end of those fortifications whose only use was to wage internecine warfare.

Though Wladislas and the Hungarian nobles attempted to uproot the internal causes of domestic unrest, the exteriors causes persisted. It was

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[29] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 39, pp. 65–66.

[30] The diet's decrees, cobbled together from a number of manuscripts, appears in Döry, *Decreta Regni Hungariae*, pp. 317–321.

[31] In a footnote on p. 318, the editor has printed one such document, which gives insight into the tax system used to raise armies in the kingdom.

Cesarini's task to resolve these issues, and he set about it with characteristic determination. The agreement that the cardinal had worked so hard to achieve throughout 1442 had been nullified by the death of Elizabeth. Elizabeth's former adherents now looked to Frederick III to serve their interests and protect the rights of the boy-king Ladislas, who they still maintained was the legitimate king. Frederick seemed happy to oblige them, and in a clear violation of Wladislas' sovereignty he summoned a Hungarian Diet to the border-city of Bratislava in order to discuss the possibilities for peace and potential support for the crusade.[32] Schlick, always the able diplomat, had given Cesarini the impression that Frederick might actually support the anti-Ottoman expedition. This moved Cesarini to encourage Wladislas to attend Frederick's diet. It is a testament to the cardinal's hold on the king that Wladislas agreed to send representatives to attend a Royal Diet in his own kingdom that had been summoned by a foreign king. As Dąbrowski writes,[33] the real purpose in calling the assembly was to set up Frederick as an arbiter in the Hungarian civil war. This gave him greater political leverage and the opportunity to drag negotiations on indefinitely, thereby preventing the possibility of a summer expedition against the Turks.[34] Frederick realized that a victory for Wladislas, which Hunyadi's triumphs had suddenly rendered plausible, would mean an increase in Jagiellonian prestige and authority and a corresponding decrease in his own. After all, he was the emperor, and as the pope had pointed out it was *his* duty to lead Christendom against the Turks. Frederick never had any intention of leading an expedition, but to have his rival in Central Europe assume this duty could only undermine his standing.[35] On a very practical level, Frederick III was afraid that the

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[32] See Baczkowski, "Stosunek," pp. 26–27.

[33] Dąbrowski, p. 110.

[34] Some Hungarian magnates seem to have accused Schlick of trying to sabotage the crusade by insisting on protracted negotiations, an accusation which he defends against in a letter dated 6 May, 1443 (Wolkan, vol. II, pp. 9–12), which was written to Matthew Thalloci and Laurence Hedervary. Schlick had known Thalloci personally while chancellor at Sigismund's court. Schlick tried to correspond with other supporters of Wladislas, including John de Dominis, the Bishop of Oradea, and one of Wladislas' most staunch supporters. In a letter dated from June, 1443, he overtly solicits the bishop's loyalty to the boy king Ladislaus (Wolkan, vol. II, pp. 24–26).

[35] This is implied in an excerpt from Piccolomini's letter to an unknown cardinal in July 1443 (Wolkan, vol. 1, pp. 158–159): "libenter regia majestas (Frederick III) consentiet, quia plurimum cupit, Teucros ex Hungarie regno depelli, quanquam Hungari ipsi, qui regi Polonie obediunt, digni sint non modica correptione, qui verum dominum relinquentes adulterum secuntur." It is stated more overtly in another letter by the same author, in which he criticizes the motives of both the pope and Wladislas as being more

armies the king could raise through extraordinary papal and royal funds could and would be turned against Austria.[36]

Cesarini and some of the king's representatives, to include Lasocki, appeared in Vienna in the early summer to discuss the agenda for the planned diet.[37] According to Piccolomini, writing to a friend:

> The cardinal (Cesarini) entreated the king repeatedly to assist in the crusade expedition and/or to send assistance. Our lord the king is not able to involve himself, however, since he is occupied with a number of issues in Bohemia and Moravia. The king willingly consented to their second request, however, which was that the king should in no way impede [the expedition]. Not only would he not impede the expedition, but he would try to assist it insofar as possible. Yet he warned the Poles that they should not impede the expedition by aggravating that part of Hungary which was loyal to Ladislas. For the prelates and barons of that part of the kingdom had sought our king's help, as regent and tutor [of Ladislas], and he does not intend to leave them defenseless. With this response the representatives of the King of Poland left, yet the cardinal still remains, that he might work out a truce between our king and the Poles.[38]

It soon became clear that despite his words Frederick had no intention of supporting the crusade, but rather would continue to make veiled threats in the hopes of derailing the project. With nothing now to gain from attend the planned diet, Wladislas withdrew his offer to send representatives, in effect canceling the event.

The truce between the two sides was scheduled to end on 24 June. If a crusade was to take place, then Wladislas needed some guarantee that Frederick III would not threaten the kingdom in his absence. Yet Frederick seemed unwilling to bind himself by any agreement until the planned

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political than religious (Wolkan, vol. I, nr. 63, pp. 163–165): "Julianus in Hungariam rediit magnumque conatum belli adversus Teucros Christiani nominis perpetuos hostes fieri procurat, inde favorem suarum partium querens, nam cum sciat horum regnum injuste pontificatum possidere, favores hominum sub colore bonorum operum querit, sortitusque ad rem hance optimum instrumentum regem Polonie, qui et ipse aliena regna invadens bonam de se prestare cupit opinionem atque ita sub colore passagii alienum Gabriel pontificatum et iste regnum tenere cupit." In this same letter, Piccolomini writes that one need not worry to much about the expedition since Cesarini, as shown during the Hussite campaigns, has no luck in war.

[36] As Piccolomini wrote to a friend (Katona, p. 233): "Sed quod nec leges pacis offerebantur, quae Ladislao regi conducerent, nec tutum erat, id bellum iuvare, in quo rex Poloniae principatum teneret, qui post triumphum, sicut insolentes homines victoria facit, adversus Austriam signa verteret."

[37] The site of the diet was changed to Hainburg, also near the Austro-Hungarian border.

[38] Katona, p. 233.

expedition against the Turks was finished.[39] Should Wladislas fail, Frederick would be in a position to assert the rights of Ladislas more forcefully. Should the expedition succeed, he had recourse to further negotiations to buy him time to work out the ramifications of a Hungarian victory.

The Revolt of Ibrahim Bey

Murad had every intention of avenging Şehabeddin's defeat in 1442 by personally leading his army into Wallachia and bringing the country once again under firm Ottoman control.[40] The Prince of Karaman Ibrahim Bey's incursions into Ottoman-controlled Anatolia derailed these plans. Hearing of the Ottoman defeat in September and with assurances from the Byzantines of a coming Christian invasion Ibrahim Bey availed himself of the opportunity to weaken the Ottomans and gain some territory for himself. In the early spring of 1443[41] Ibrahim Bey launched an offen-

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[39] This assessment is found in Baczkowski, "Stosunek," pp. 28–29.

[40] Gazavât, p. 4 (Imber's translation, p. 44): "You should prepare for a campaign, because—if God Most High is willing—in the spring I shall lead an imperial campaign against the infidels of Hungary. You should assemble the troops of Islam in good time." See also Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 118): "His [Murad's] intention was to invade Hungary before the end of August to avenge himself for the injuries that had been done to him, and to compensate himself for the damage and losses which he had recently suffered at the hands of the Hungarians." See also Chalkokondyles, p. 282.

[41] It is not entirely certain when these first attacks by Ibrahim Bey took place. My account differs somewhat from İnalcik's treatment of the subject in footnote 7 to the Gazavât (pp. 84–86). According to İnalcik, there were two separate invasions by Ibrahim Bey in late 1442/early 1443. I maintain a different chronology, arguing that the first Karaman campaign and the seizure of Akşehir and Yenişehir took place in the early spring of 1443. Ibrahim Bey's final insurrection took place in the spring of 1444. The problem stems from the dates of the historical lists (takvimler) found in Turan (p. 30, p. 40). These lists do not contain specific calendar dates, but in their entries reckon backwards from the date of writing, stating that from the time of this event it has been "x" number of years. The starting date from which these lists are reckoned is therefore of the utmost importance. In both historical lists found in the "A text" (Turan, p. 30, p. 40) I reckon the years back from from the hijri year 849 h. This is made clear in the one instance by the entry for the Battle of Varna, which the author states was "one year ago." Since we know that the battle took place in the hijri year 848, the date of writing and reckoning must be 849 h. This reckoning makes sense with the other entries in the list, e.g. Ibrahim Bey's earlier insurrection in 839 h. (see Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 129; İnalcik, "Murad II.," p. 606), which is listed as taking place "ten years ago." Both Aşıkpaşazâde and Neşri state that Karaman began his insurrection after hearing of Şehabeddin's defeat. In the second list in the "A text" mentioning Ibrahim Bey's insurrection (Turan, p. 40) Karaman's seizure of Akşehir and Yenişehir takes place in the hijri year 846 (12 May 1442–30 April 1443 AD). The same list states that in the hijri year 847 (1 May 1443—19 April 1444), or "two years ago," Ibrahim Bey invaded Germiyan, Beypazar, Sivrihisar, Engüriyye,

sive against the Ottomans. According to the *Gazavât*,[42] Ibrahim was acting in accordance with instructions he had received from the Byzantine Emperor. The emperor, expecting that the fleet would arrive in 1443 as the pope had promised and that the land expedition would be underway as well seems to have encouraged Karaman to revolt in the hopes of drawing the Ottoman Army into Anatolia. This helps explain the flurry of diplomatic activity out of Byzantium in the spring of 1443 and the urgent solicitation of the papacy and the Venetians for an immediate crusade.[43] Yet as we have seen, for reasons outside Byzantine control, the promised fleet did not appear in the summer of 1443 or indeed at all that year. The land expedition itself was several months late. If Byzantium was indeed the instigator of Ibrahim Bey's revolt, and it seems that there was at least some understanding of mutual cooperation between the two, the episode shows the extreme difficulty of attempting large-scale joint military operations with far-flung partners in an era in which word traveled no faster than a horse or a ship.

Whether at the instigation of the emperor or not,[44] in the early spring of 1443 Ibrahim Bey attacked Akşehir and Yenişehir, bringing his armies

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Karahisar, Kütahiyye and Bolvadın. This indicates that Ibrahim Bey's first invasion began in late 846, probably some time in March 1443 when Ottoman campaigns also normally began, i.e. after Hunyadi's defeat of Şehabeddin but before the start of the new hijri year. Murad's Annals (Menage, p. 578) put Murad's first invasion of Anatolia and the peace treaty with Karaman in 847, in other words some time after 30 April, 1443. Western sources suggest that Murad's campaign in Anatolia began in May and lasted until the end of the summer. This is why it is listed in the year 847 h., i.e. after the start of the new hijri calendar year. Based on this, I maintain that in the early spring of 1443 Ibrahim Bey seized Akşehir and Yenişehir, perhaps Beyşehir as well. These were more or less the lands Murad had taken from Karaman in 1437. The other cities, Germiyan, Beypazar, Sivrihisar, etc. he did not seize until the second campaign which took place late in the hijri year 847, i.e. in the early months of 1444 (sometime before 1 May), and not long after the Battle of Zlatitsa. This also corresponds with the list on Turan, p. 30, which has Ibrahim Bey's invasion occuring after Murad's abdication and Turahan Bey's imprisonment, but before the peace of Szeged in the summer. Murad's 1444 invasion of Karaman's lands therefore took place after the Treaty of Edirne was signed—sometime after June 1444. This is why it is included in the second list of the "A text" along with the other events of the hijri year 848, which began on 20 April 1444. By accepting a reckoning year of 849 h., the entry in the list which says that Murad's invasion of Karaman's lands took place "one year prior" makes sense.

[42] Gazavât, p. 4 (Imber, p. 44).

[43] The diplomatic activity undertaken by Byzantium was also noted by the author of the Gazavât, p. 7 (Imber's translation, p. 47).

[44] It seems certain that in one of the operations in 1443 or 1444, if not both, Ibrahim Bey was working in conjunction with the Christians. Yet one must be wary of taking every Ottoman accusation at face value. The fifteenth-century Ottoman historians were eager to justify Ottoman aggression on the Muslim lands of Ibrahim Bey. The easiest

near to Bursa, all the while "plundering and pillaging, causing destruction and chaos."[45] Principal among the atrocities committed by his troops, according to somewhat biased Ottoman sources, was the rape of Muslim girls and women.[46] Aşıkpaşazâde remarked that in the ensuing year a number of children were born whose fathers would be forever unknown.[47] Ibrahim Bey was not alone in his rebellion.[48] Upon the death of the Emir of Menteşe in 1424 Murad annexed this province to the empire.[49] One of the members of the Menteşeoğulu dynasty, likely İlyas Bey son of Ahmed Bey,[50] had sought refuge in Karaman.[51] While Ibrahim was conducting operations against the Ottomans in the north, İlyas Bey moved to retake the province of Menteşe "with Karaman assistance." He succeeded in seizing the major cities of Balat (Miletus), Beçin and Milas, and then remained camped near Selçuk.[52] Ibrahim Bey's soldiers seized the stretch of the southern coast from Antalya up to Balat with assistance from another ally, one of the sons of Kara Yülük, a former leader of the Akkoyunlu federation.[53] The plan seems to have been for these forces to meet

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justification for such an attack was that Ibrahim Bey was working and cooperating with infidels. It seems fairly certain that this happened in 1444, mostly based on the opinions rendered by the judges in Cairo, which it would have been dangerous and foolish to falsify. There is a good chance it occurred in 1443 as well, though it is wise to maintain a bit of skepticism.

45 Turan, p. 40.

46 These are remarked on at length in Neşri, pp. 637–645. Once again, one has to be wary of the Ottoman sources, which may have exaggerated Ibrahim Bey's conduct as a way to justify Murad's own actions.

47 Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 140.

48 The main source here is the letter from Ragusa to Wladislas dated 13 May, 1443 (Chmel, Materialien, p. 114) in which they inform him of events in Anatolia.

49 Aşıkpaşazâde, pp. 115–116. See also Paul Wittek, *Das Fürstentum Mentesche*, 1934 (reprint Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1967), pp. 97–102. Wittek argues that Balaban Pasha, the head of Tokat prison, was not in fact made governor of the newly-conquered province.

50 He is seen leading a similar insurrection in 1451 (Uzunkarıoğlu, Osmanlı Tarihi, vol. 1, p. 453.)

51 See Wittek, *Das Fürstentum Mentesche*, p. 105.

52 The word for Selçuk given in the text is altum locum, derived from the Italian word for the city, Altoluogo, which was in turn based off the older Turkish name for the city Ayasoluk, which derived its name from the famous Byzantine basilica there of Saint John, or Hagios Theologos.

53 This is based off of the Ragusan letter, which states: "ex alio vero latere eundem filium domini Caramani cum potenti et numeroso exercitu et etiam ut dicitur, cum adiutorio domini Dimironich magni Tartari tentorium eiusdem domini Teucri hostiliter mansisse." The word Dimironich would seem to refer to "the sons of Timur," using a Slavic patronymic (quite common for the slavic Ragusans, who refer to Ibrahim Bey in the same letter as Caramanonich). Aşıkpaşazâde (p. 124) writes that Ahmed Bey

up in the north near the city of Selçuk and from there march against the Ottomans.[54]

Murad had been hunting at Tavuslu while his viziers were busy assembling an army to march on Wallachia. The sultan at first refused to acknowledge the news coming out of Anatolia, despite Halil Pasha's repeated warnings.[55] The Ottoman army was perhaps already headed north[56] when the Grand Vezir sent a certain Kattaroğlu to deliver in person an account of Karaman's depredations. Murad questioned the messenger and examined the letters he bore. Convinced of the seriousness of the problem, the army turned around and set out for Edirne. There, the author of the Gazavât writes, Murad consulted with his ulema to obtain approval for an invasion of Karaman. It was a violation of sharia law to attack another muslim ruler, and Murad was concerned about the reactions of both his Anatolian subjects and of the neighboring Muslim states, in particular the Mamelukes. "When he had explained the situation to them, he said: 'Masters, what is your ruling? What is the judgment of the sharia if a man makes common cause with the infidel and causes harm and oppression to the community of Muhammad?' The ulema replied, 'If this is the case, he is himself an infidel.'"[57] By declaring Ibrahim Bey an infidel, or kafir, the Mullahs not only justified an assault on Karaman but actually encouraged it as a form of jihad.[58] Ibrahim Bey and his lands were now in a legal category equivalent to the infidel lands of Hungary.

Menteşeoğlu, Ilyas Bey's father, sought refuge with Kara Yülük, the head of the Akkoyunlu who were indeed among Tamerlane's successors. Also, a Byzantine letter from 1444 says the "sons of Kara Yülük"/*Karanlugk filii* were assisting Ibrahim Bey in his insurrection (see next chapter). At the time the head of the Akkoyunlu was Hamza Bey. But he was only one of thirteen sons of Kara Yülük.

[54] Neşri, p. 637, says that Ibrahim Bey conquered Emir Dağ, i.e. Ankara. The letter from Ragusa says that the armies were to meet up around "a certain place called 'altum locum,' which we have already identified as Selçuk (see above note). Hunyadi, writing to Branković based on information from 11 May (Chmel, Materialien, 115) likewise mentions that Ibrahim Bey had conquered the cities "up to Bursa."

[55] Gazavât, pp. 4–5 (Imber's translation, pp. 44–46). It may be that it was not the sultan who was ignoring these messages but Fazlullah and other hawks on the divan who may have seen it as a plot by Halil Pasha to sabotage the Wallachian offensive being planned for that summer.

[56] Chalkokondyles, pp. 282–283.

[57] Gazavât, p. 6 (Imber's translation, p. 45). This consultation may actually be referring to the consultation of the four Cairo judges in 1444. See next chapter.

[58] This process of dubbing a fellow Muslim ruler as a kafir is known as takfir. It is still used today by some Muslim jurists as a means of justifying intra-muslim warfare. See El-Shai, Struggle for Domination, pp. 10–13.

Murad set out to punish Ibrahim Bey. He first sent for his eldest son, Ala'eddin,[59] who brought the troops from his appanage in Amasya as well as that portion of the Army of Anatolia that could be readily mustered. Murad joined him soon after with a good portion of the army of Rumelia.[60] The other half was left behind, no doubt to deal with any threats that might emerge from the north. Upon entering Anatolia Murad sent out a detachment to conduct reconnaissance, capture informants and learn the whereabouts of Ibrahim Bey. This advance force seized a few men in a brief skirmish who gave the sultan the information he needed. Those of Karaman's men who had fled the skirmish went to Ibrahim Bey to report the news. "When they explained what had happened to them, and how many had been taken prisoner, the Karamanid went out of his mind and had no idea what to do. When the troops who were accompanying him heard this, they fled company by company and scattered back to their own homes."[61] His surprised reaction may have been due to Byzantine assurances that a Hungarian army was marching from the north, which should have prevented Murad from abandoning Rumelia with his army. Ibrahim Bey fled to Taş-ili in Syria,[62] the same mountainous region his father had fled to when faced with a similar threat in 1417. In order to draw Ibrahim Bey out while at the same time keeping his army intact to defend against an invasion from the north he unleashed the Rumelian Tatars.[63] "They mounted their horses and began to ravage the Karamanid's realms and to deport its inhabitants in droves." Ala'eddin led another portion of Ottoman troops and ravaged the areas around Konya and Larende.

Faced with disaster and the destruction of his lands Ibrahim Bey sent a delegation of his own *ulema* to plead for mercy and some sort of peace. The ulema met with the three pashas, who in turn brought the men into a meeting with Murad. According to the Gazavât, Murad remained obdurate and refused to hear their pleas, but the pashas begged him to reconsider, no doubt realizing that with a crusader offensive likely they must

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[59] Giese's Anonymous Chronicle (pp. 66–67) says that Ala'eddin was sent by Murad. Neşri (p. 643) writes that they marched together. This leads me to believe that Ala'eddin was summoned to begin the assault but Murad later joined him with half the army of Rumelia.

[60] Hunyadi's letter to Branković from the summer of 1443 (Chmel, Materialien, p. 115) states that aside from Kasım Pasha in Sophia there were only two thousand troops in Vim left to guard against an invasion.

[61] Gazavât, p. 5 (Imber's translation, p. 45)

[62] Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 140.

[63] For more on this group of Tatars, who had been settled in Rumelia by Bayezid, see İnalcik's lengthy footnote in Gazavât, p. 83, footnote 6.

reach some resolution to the fighting in the south. Murad agreed to make peace with Ibrahim Bey on the condition that he "never again stir up sedition or mischief. He then clad the envoys in robes, and gave the Karamanid back his lands." The merciful, if not generous terms agreed upon by Murad indicate the predicament the sultan found himself in by late summer 1443. The crusaders had thankfully bungled plans to coordinate a Karaman-crusader attack combined with a naval blockade of the straits. Yet the Ottomans were aware the Hungarians were assembling a large army. An assault could come at any time. Ibrahim Bey's own decision to seek refuge in Mameluke lands[64] may have also influenced the Porte. The sultan in Cairo still maintained his claim of suzerainty over southeastern Anatolia, a fact which had nearly brought the two great Muslim empires to war during the last outbreak of fighting in Karaman in 1437 (see chapter two). Facing an imminent attack from the north, the Porte wanted to give neither Ibrahim Bey nor his potential allies, the Mamelukes, any pretense for aggression in the south.

The campaign against Ibrahim Bey had taken the entire summer.[65] It was impossible now for Murad to consider an expedition into Wallachia, and his angst was exacerbated by the tragic news that his eldest son, Ala'eddin, had died soon after his return to Amasya.[66] Weary and beset with grief Murad decided to strike a deal with his prisoner Vlad Dracul.[67] He would release the voivode if he would swear not to wage war against the sultan and to assist Murad in fighting his enemies, whoever they might be. As Wavrin writes, Murad "had already held the Lord of Wallachia prisoner for a miserable four years (sic!), causing him to suffer extreme pain and distress from which he never expected to escape except by death. Consequently, he was overjoyed at this opportunity and agreed to everything that the Grand Turk had asked."[68] Upon his return Vlad

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[64] Taş-ili was a border region between Karaman and Mameuluke-controlled southeastern Anatolia. Throughout Ibrahim's reign the rulers and inhabitants of the region seemed to enjoy close relations with Karaman, though formally the territory went back and forth between the Mamelukes and the Karamanids, at this time seemingly in the hands of the former.

[65] See İnalcik's footnote in Gazavât, p. 85, for dating these events, along with my comments above on the matter.

[66] Menage, p. 578. The entry suggests that the news arrived between the signing of the peace treaty with Ibrahim Bey in 1443 and the beginning of the crusader invasion, i.e. between late summer and autumn 1443.

[67] This appears in Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 117), who is the best source for Wallachian affairs at this time.

[68] Ibid., p. 118.

removed Basarab II, who had been placed there the previous year by Hunyadi, reinstating his own son Mircea II. On the whole Vlad was well-received back in his own lands, his agreement with the sultan pleasing some and angering others. Murad's decision to allow his return proved judicious in the short term. At little cost to himself, he had succeeded in eliminating Wallachian support for the crusade expedition in 1443.

Preparations for the Crusade

Denied the valuable support of the Wallachians,[69] the crusaders had nevertheless found an equally zealous and capable ally in the Serbian despot George Branković. George had fled the country after 1439, the year in which the Ottomans seized both the despot's lands and his sons. George still possessed significant holdings abroad, particularly in Hungary, which had been granted to him by Sigismund and Albert as a means of assuring his loyalty. Due to his family ties with the Cillis (he was Ulrich's father-in-law) Branković supported Elizabeth in the early years of the civil war.[70] Wladislas therefore confiscated George's lands and doled them out to his own supporters. The despot was ultimately forced to find shelter on the Dalmatian coast, where he was somewhat grudgingly assisted by the Venetians and the Ragusans. He remained in Ragusa until the summer of 1441. There, he received the news that his two captured sons had been placed in chains, blinded, and imprisoned in Tokat fortress. Soon after, Branković's remaining possessions on the Dalmatian coast were seized by Stephen Vukcic, a Turkish protégé and pretender to the Bosnian throne. Shortly afterwards the Venetians themselves took the territories, arguing that they had fallen into the hands of the Ottoman enemy.[71]

Left with nothing, Branković decided to neglect his family ties to the Cillis and to reconcile himself with Wladislas. With this in mind he traveled to Buda to attend the diet that had convened there on June 9th to discuss the upcoming crusade. "Pleading and in tears he beseeched Wladislas to have pity on his depressed and miserable condition and to take action so he might recoup his lands and dominions and also avenge

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[69] Though Vlad himself refused to participate, it seems almost certain that a number of Vlachs, not just those living in Transylvania but those who had fought with Hunyadi in 1442 and who considered themselves part of his familia, would have taken part in this campaign as well.

[70] See Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, pp. 176–177.

[71] Ibid., pp. 178–179.

his sons whom the Turkish emperor had blinded and neutered."[72] With nothing more to lose and everything to gain, Branković put his full effort into supporting the expedition.[73]

With the despot on board it was decided that the army would march from Belgrade and head south through Branković's former lands in Serbia. George would serve as guide in his own territory, where it was believed his former subjects would flock to him in support. A letter from Hunyadi to Branković written soon after the June Diet in Buda[74] exudes optimism. Hunyadi informed Branković of Ibrahim Bey's insurrection in Anatolia and that there were only two thousand soldiers left in Vim under the command of Turahan Bey's brother Ishak and Turahan's son Ömer with which to guard against the Serbo-Hungarian invasion. It was rumored that Turahan himself had been taken ill and was currently laid up in Smederevo. According to Hunyadi, the Turks would flee the land the moment they invaded Serbia. "None of the Turks from this side of the sea are prepared to withstand us but intend to send their household goods to the other side of the sea. The empire of the Turks has never been so pressed and desolate as now." There was widespread hope that the expedition would soon set off to take advantage of this favorable situation. The king himself headed toward Belgrade at the end of June, hoping shortly to lead the expedition into the Balkans.[75] This timetable proved unrealistic. Even though a good deal of money had been collected in the kingdom through the taxes proclaimed in March, much of these funds had already been spent.[76] Perhaps more important, there were no guar-

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[72] Długosz, p. 283.

[73] Branković provided a good portion of the funding for the expedition, as noted by Cyriac of Ancona (Bodnar, letter 2, pp. 11–12). The despot had succeeded in smuggling his treasury out of Serbia before the Ottoman conquest in 1439, which according to Bonfini amounted to 500,000 florints (Bonfini, p. 431). He also provided somewhere between 4,500 and 8,000 cavalrymen which joined the expedition after reaching Serbia (see below).

[74] Chmel, *Materialien*, p. 115. The letter is not dated but it must have been written in late June since Hunyadi makes reference to news received soon after June 11th, and he also writes of "our recent meetings."

[75] Dąbrowski, p. 115.

[76] Schlick made the following comment in a letter from July 1443 (Wolkan, vol. II, nr. 23, p. 43): "In Hungaria per operam reverendissimi cardinalis sancti angeli magna pecunia collecta est sub colore expeditionis bellice contra Turcos faciende." In a letter written shortly afterwards (nr. XXIV, p. 45), he mentions this again, but states the money has already been used up in order to fight Giskra in the north (see below for more on this conflict). This was an exaggeration, and more a reflection of the perpetual Habsburg fear that resources designated for the crusade would be used to fight Austria.

antees regarding Hungary's security during Wladislas' absence. Frederick III continued to make veiled threats in the hopes that the king, fearful of his throne, would be forced to abandon the planned expedition.

Though Frederick's posturing was troublesome to the court, a more immediate problem was Giskra's military activities in the north. The former Hussite commander had been conducting offensive operations in Slovakia since May, maintaining that the truce he had entered into the previous year was no longer binding after Elizabeth's death. To counter this threat Wladislas sent Simon Rozgony, who had a vested interest in the region, to help defend it. He arrived there in July, but was unable to begin offensive operations until August after more troops had arrived from the south. Having seized Spis castle Simon decided to enter into negotiations with Giskra, and the two signed a truce that would last until September of the following year. It was only after September 1st, when the truce was signed and enacted, that the expedition against the Turks could finally get under way.

The results of five months of planning fell far short of the high hopes for the expedition held earlier in the year. In April Wladislas had written that the papacy had already put together a fleet of 38 ships with contributors from various Mediterranean powers.[77] At the same time he was under the impression that the Byzantines would contribute a land and sea contingent to assist in the invasion. Foreign knights were expected to flock to the kingdom to fight against the infidel. Much of this optimism was on account of Cesarini's incessant and overly optimistic promotion of the crusade.[78] The cardinal seems to have shared the king's optimism, as his correspondence with Schlick demonstrates. In a letter written 31 August, the day before Giskra and Rozgony signed their truce, Kaspar Schlick glibly mocked Cesarini and the stalled expedition. "You say that an army is being daily assembled against the Turks, but so slowly that I fear you will not be able to taunt me on the feast of Saint Michael. For you

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[77] *Codex epistolaris saecule decimi quinti*, vol. 1, nr. 123, pp. 136–138. "Ut autem caritati vestrae singula, quae Dei ordinatione in hac re nobiscum agitur patefaciamus, Romanus pontifex pro bello hiuiusmodi triginta octo galeas nobis promisit et quidem romanus ipse pontifex et Veneti duodecim, rex Aragonum decem, dux Burgundiae sex, dux Mediolani octo, magister de Rhodo duas galeas nobis pro praesenti guerra auxilium esse debent, hae autem galeae martimam classem ducere debent in Hellesponto mansurae ad imediendum Saracenorum transitum et imperatoris Turcorum ad Turciam regressum. Imperator etiam Graecorum cum aliis principibus orientalibus, nondum mari sed et terra personis in propriis nos adiuvabant."

[78] Długosz, p. 282.

once said in Vienna that when that time came I was to remember what you had said. At that time I said to you truly that the army would not leave to fight the Turks this summer. You took the other position, led by so much hope that you thought you would not make it back to Buda before all of Hungary would have arisen in arms [to fight the Turks]."[79] The chancellor goes on to state that only Hunyadi will be prepared to march forth with his "Transylvanians," and that even he is having trouble finding the infantry necessary to man his tabor. Schlick's smugness in the letter at the hardships facing the expedition is apparent, and seem to have angered Cesarini intensely. After all, it was the Habsburgs themselves who through insinuations and veiled threats about Hungary's security, as well as support for Giskra, had created the largest obstacle to the expedition's progress.

It was apparent by late summer that there would be no naval component to the operation, and no ships to blockade the straits. The Byzantines, who had signed a peace treaty with the Ottomans some time before May, and who felt stung by the lack of western support the previous year, were not willing to openly participate in the expedition. The foreign kings and princes and promised hordes of volunteer crusaders failed to appear.[80] The king wasn't even able to convince his own Polish subjects to contribute much to the campaign. Some funds were raised in Małopolska and Wielkopolska to support the expedition after much pleading from Wladislas,[81] yet armed military assistance occurred only on a volunteer and personal basis. Much of this had to do with Hungary's support for the papacy discussed in the last chapter. On 22 March, 1443, a new facet in this quarrel emerged when Wladislas declared in the presence of the Uniate Patriarch Isidore, who was currently visiting Buda,[82] that the Uniate and Latin clergy in Poland would henceforth be treated on an equal footing. This noble gesture, made in the interests of a United Christendom, reflected Cesarini's ever-growing influence on the king. The decision was not well received by Oleśnicki or the other Latin prelates in the Polish clergy whose interests were most affected. It seemed that Wladislas, now completely out from under the influence of the Polish cardinal, had begun to prioritize his own interests and the interests of

[79] Wolkan, vol. II, nr. 37, pp. 69–74.

[80] There were some traditional crusaders as well, though they were few in number, see the description of the campaign below.

[81] Dąbrowski, p. 116.

[82] Gill, *The Council of Florence*, p. 362.

Hungary over those of Poland. This hardly created enthusiasm for the king's projects among the Poles or Oleśnicki, to include the crusade. In short, by late summer 1443 most realized that the universal *passagium*, which was originally to have united under one banner the various kingdoms of Christendom and work in conjunction with a multi-national fleet of 20 ships, would in fact be comprised almost entirely of troops from Hungary and Serbia along with a significant number of paid Czech mercenaries. These were accompanied by a few troops from Poland and joined later on by smaller contingents from Bosnia, Albania and Bulgaria. There would be no fleet.

Despite this the Hungarians moved forward with operations. Most of the burden and responsibility for organizing the expedition fell on Hunyadi. The voivode had paid out at least 32,000 florints for the campaign.[83] Some of this he had collected from the extensive estates he now controlled in Transylvania and elsewhere.[84] Much of it had been seized from the Turks in the victories of recent years. Hunyadi planned on equipping and leading a disciplined and professional force. For this reason, he employed a new tactical element against the Turks—the Hussite tabor. Both Wladislas and Hunyadi had direct experience with tabor tactics (see chapter four), yet this was the first time they would attempt to lead the wagenburg against the Turks. Hunyadi had already begun to produce wagons for the tabor in Braşov just after the Royal Diet announcing the expedition in March.[85] In another letter to Braşov dated 23 June, Hunyadi ordered the city burghers to do a better job of listening to "a certain

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[83] Katona, p. 270. See also Schlick's letter to Cesarini dated August 31 (Wolkan, vol. II, nr. 37) in which he writes that Hunyadi had paid up to 60,000 florints of his own funds for the army: "Subjungitis preterea, magnificum Johannem wayvwodam, et si omnes deficiant, solum velle cum Transsilvanis aggredi Theucros illumque jam equites currusque Bohemico more instructos habere, pro quorum expeditione sexaginta (another manuscript says "quadraginta") milia florenorum exposuerit, ad quem jam iter fecissetis, nisi peditum comparandorum curam ad currus necssariorum vobis mandasset, quos non facile dicitis apud vos reperiri."

[84] Wladislas issued orders that the Martinszins tax in Transylvania was to be paid that year to Hunyadi in its entirety for the purpose of defending the kingdom. Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2465, pp. 119–120.

[85] Ibid., nr. 2451, pp. 110–111. Due to the interesting nature of this passage, the text is provided here in full: "Viri praegrandis industriae amici nobis summe honorandi. Quemadmodum per praesentes vestris conscripserimus amcitiis itatenus et nunc scitote quod nos die nuperrime intimato duce deo gressus nostros exercituales ab hinc removebimus. Igitur petimus caritative et multum confidenter seriosius commitentes quatenus ipsa die ut praedictum est pro honore et salute vestris currus Thaboriorum simul cum bombardis, pixidibus, machinis et cunctis ingeniis erga nos constitu(i) debeatis et aliud non facturi alioquin totam dispositionem totumque negotium quod

Bohemian"[86] who had been sent to supervise the construction of the war wagons. He further outlined what the city needed to contribute in terms of armaments, particularly firearms. The passage is worth quoting in full:

> Honorable and dear men. Through [our envoy] the learned Michael, our familiaris, we have sent you six measurements/molds for stone cannonballs asking that you please employ all available stonecutters to cut 40 stones for each measure/mold within twelve days.[87] We also ask that you please produce and prepare 40 "rifles",[88] with the understanding that as long as we live we will pay you back according to your wish. We also ask that you show the requisite haste in preparing the taborite wagons according to the demonstration of the Bohemian. The same Bohemian has told us that much [is being done] improperly, and that you show little care with these wagons and indeed have mocked him. I do not receive this news gladly but with much sadness, for such business is done not so much for us as for all of Christendom. We ask that you follow all instructions regarding the aforementioned wagons and that you provide good and strong horses for them. The rest will be told to you by the bearer of this letter.[89]

Not only were the crusaders planning on using a Hussite tabor in the coming campaign, but they had turned Brașov into an arsenal for producing at least a portion of the tabor and its accompanying firearms. The tone of the letter suggests that the city already had the facilities to produce such weapons.[90] Equipped with wagons, weapons and horses the tabor still needed soldiers and gunpowder. Concerning the latter Venice,

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deus avertat confundetis. Scripta in Megyes feria tertia proxima ante festum beati Benedicti abbatis, anno domini et cetera XLIIIo."

[86] Probably Jenik z Meckova, who was later given command of the tabor.

[87] An interesting indication that there were at least six different calibers of firearms used by the tabor.

[88] The word "*puscas*" given here must refer to an arquebus. This term in the Latin text is nearly identical to the modern day Romanian word for rifle, *puşcă*. This is turn derived from the Czech word *puška*. This etymology indicates the role of the Hussites in the spread of firearms, as well as their adoption, along with the relevant terminology, by others in East-Central Europe. The German word *Büchsen* meaning "rifle" is likely derived from the same Czech word as well.

[89] Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2461, pp. 116–117.

[90] In terms of personnel to man the tabor the evidence is provided in the abovementioned letter from Kaspar Schlick (Wolkan, vol. II, nr. 37), who wrote that Cesarini had been tasked to find the requisite infantrymen but had so far been unsuccessful: "Subjungitis preterea, magnificum Johannem wayvwodam, et si omnes deficiant, solum velle cum Transsilvanis aggredi Theucros illumque jam equites currusque Bohemico more instructos habere, pro quorum expeditione sexaginta (another manuscript says "quadraginta") milia florenorum exposuerit, ad quem jam iter fecissetis, nisi peditum comparandorum curam ad currus necssariorum vobis mandasset, quos non facile dicitis apud vos reperiri." Later in the same letter Schlick implies that Cesarini had asked the Austrians and the Poles to provide footsoldiers but had met with no luck.

perhaps feeling contrite due to the scuttled fleet, agreed to donate 10,000 pounds of gunpowder to be delivered and handled by Matthew Thalloci.[91] Acquiring the requisite number of infantrymen proved more difficult.

We know from Czech sources that the crusader tabor in 1443 was composed of 600 war wagons.[92] Not all of these were built in Braşov. Many of them, perhaps the majority, were provided by Czech mercenary groups who had been hired by Wladislas previously to fight against Elizabeth. The tabor would play an important role in the coming campaign as a mobile fortress and redoubt for the crusader forces. It nearly succeeded in annihilating the Ottoman army on several occasions, though the sultan's troops were called off in the last minute due to the sage advice of Turahan Bey, who was later mocked and imprisoned for his perceived cowardice in this regard. Hunyadi's cavalry, composed largely of Vlachs and Transylvanians, seems to have preferred to operate outside of the tabor, a point noted by the Czech mercenaries themselves.[93] The Rittmeister in charge of the wagenburg was John of Mečkova the Younger.[94] He had earlier belonged to the Oberites or "orphans," a branch of Hussites whose views placed them somewhere between the more radical *taborites* and moderate *utraquists*. The Czech infantry manning the tabor were led by John Čapek,[95] a mercenary who had fought for Wladislas during the Civil War (see chapter five), and who also had earlier belonged to the "Orphans." Both Mečkova and Čapek had served under Prokop the Great. It is one of the great ironies of this era that the same heretic enemies of the faith who ten years prior had handily defeated Cesarini's crusaders were now crusaders themselves, led by the very same cardinal.

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[91] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, p. 66.

[92] The source for this information is several excerpts from Czech chronicles published by Jireček ("Válečníci čestí XV. Století," *Časopis Musea Království*, vol. 18, 1859, pt. 2, pp. 158–159). The source makes it clear that this count of 600 was only for the military wagons and does not include the numerous wagons for carrying food. That the food wagons were also present is made clear in Hunyadi's letter to Ujlaki (see below). We do not know how many of these were produced in Braşov and how many were contributed by the mercenary groups themselves.

[93] Jireček, "Válečníci," p. 158.

[94] This is stated in the introduction to the chronicle. See also Grygiel, "Echa Bitwy," p. 135. The author's assessment regarding the use, or rather lack of use of the tabor in 1443 is mistaken. Turkish sources clearly demonstrate that the tabor was employed quite often (see below).

[95] In a letter dated 28 June, 1443 (Chmel, *Materialien*, p. 114), Cesarini wrote to Frederick III: "solum expectatur certa pecunia ventura a Johanne Vayuoda pro stipendio Chachonis, et suorum pedestrium, qui debent conducere thabor curruum."

There were somewhere between five and eight thousand infantrymen operating as part of the tabor[96] in addition to 1,500 Czech cavalry. In addition there were the troops of the noble and royal banderia as well as Cesarini's banner of foreign crusaders. A very loose guess would put the combined numbers of these latter two groups at between two and four thousand medium/heavy cavalry.[97] The Transylvanian army numbered somewhere between five and seven thousand light and medium cavalry.[98] The army assembled in Hungary in 1443 therefore numbered between fourteen and twenty thousand men. Michael Beheim, whose account is drawn from Hans Maugest, a participant and eyewitness of the campaign, writes that Wladislas had gathered together fourteen thousand men prior to crossing the Danube into Serbia, suggesting that the lower of these two numbers may be the correct one.[99] As we shall see below, between eight and nine thousand Serbians and several hundred Bosnians as well as a number of Bulgarians, Albanians, etc. joined the army after it had entered Ottoman-controlled territory. Given these numbers it is reasonable to assume that the crusader army of the Long March numbered around 25,000 total troops.[100]

This number was significantly less than the 30,000 Hunyadi had said earlier that summer would be necessary for the invasion. Still, the voivode

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[96] See chapter four for how I arrived at these numbers. We know that the crusaders had problems manning the war wagons, and the number five thousand assumes that the wagons were less than half-manned. The number eight thousand, admittedly a rather arbitrary one, simply assumes slightly stronger manning for the wagons.

[97] See chapter four. Unlike in 1444, there is no mention in the sources of which, if any, of the Hungarian magnates (aside from Hunyadi and later Ujlaki) actually marched with the king. Many of the Hungarian nobles were likely hesitant to do so given the uncertain political situation in the country, preferring instead to stay back and defend their own lands from the possible aggression of other nobles. As at Varna, we can guess that Wladislas' own royal banderia numbered around 4,000 men. Yet many of these were Czech mercenaries who have already been counted as part of the tabor. In addition to the Czech mercenaries the king also had with him his noble Polish and Hungarian retainers, perhaps one to two thousand men. Also among the banderia would be Cesarini's group of foreign crusaders. Aside from passing mention in Długosz this group of crusaders does not appear in the letters or any other narrative sources for the campaign's battles. This leads one to believe the numbers were not that significant. It likely included no more than several hundred to a thousand men.

[98] See chapter four. Since this was an offenisve operation outside the country, the 1,350 troops provided by the counties were not obliged to take part.

[99] Beheim, line 32 (Imber's translation, p. 167).

[100] This is the same number Dąbrowski arrives at (p. 120, footnote 5). The inexact nature of the calculations bears mention once again. 25,000 troops is also the number given by Doukas (p. 182) for the expedition, though he mistakenly believed Branković, not Hunyadi, was leading the army.

was confident after his victories against the Ottomans in the previous year, and believed the Ottoman Empire to be in a state of turmoil. Some of this optimism was likely the result of repeated Byzantine urging and optimism. There was also a clear expectation that their numbers would be greatly augmented once they reached Serbia, and on this point he had been assured not only by the ever-optimistic Cardinal Cesarini but also by Branković who could personally vouch for his Serbians.

The Battles of Nish and Aleksinac

The peace treaty with Giskra on September 1st allowed the long-awaited expedition to finally get under way. Past August very few seemed to believe the *passagium* would actually occur. After months of planning, setbacks and re-planning it seemed the land expedition would meet the same fate as the fleet operations of that year. The Ottomans themselves seem to have believed the campaign awash,[101] as shown by their lack of heightened readiness in October when the crusaders did finally enter their territory. The occurrence of the crusade was due to the determined perseverance of Cesarini, the desperate urging and generous funding of Branković as well as the able planning and generous personal contributions of Hunyadi. Eugene IV must have been pleased to see his Bull from early January nearing fulfillment. The rest of Christendom waited skeptically and with baited breath.

Shortly after 5 September[102] Wladislas left the capital and marched along the left bank of the Danube. He passed through Futog (21 September), Petrovaradin[103] and then crossed the Danube at Slankamen (28

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[101] The Ottomans knew from their informants abroad that the naval expedition would no longer occur (Bibliothèque Nationale, Manuscrits Arabes nr. 4434, pp. 133b-138b, titled مكتوب سلطان محمد خان لسلطان مصر).

[102] Wladislas was in Buda on September 5, but in Futak on 21 September. See Stanisław Sroka, "Itinerarium Władysława Warneńczyka Jako Króla Węgier (1440–1444)," in *Z dziejów stosunków polsko-węgierskich w późnym średniowieczu* (Universitas, 1995), pp. 139–171, p. 161.

[103] This place name is mentioned in Beheim's poem (p. 328) as Wardein. This does not refer to Oradea/Varad (as given in Imber's translation, p. 167), which is known in German as Grosswardein, but instead it refers to Petrovaradin, or in German Peterwardein. This makes sense given the route Wladislas traveled heading south out of Buda. Oradea, which is in the north, and quite a distance East of Buda, does not make sense here. See Dąbrowski, p. 121, note 5.

September).[104] At this point the king was accompanied by his own banderia as well as Cesarini. The cardinal had under his banner "the men from diverse nations and kingdoms who had chosen to follow" the church's summons, i.e. the crusader volunteers. After crossing at Slankamen the king and the cardinal proceeded to Belgrade. It would have taken Wladislas and Cesarini only two or at most three days to travel from Slankamen to Belgrade, yet the king was still residing in the fortress city on October 11th. This suggests that Belgrade was the appointed place of assembly where Hunyadi, Branković and the king would join forces, and outline the final plans for the campaign.[105] The Ottoman war machine was designed for offensive campaigns waged according to their own timetable. Hunyadi knew that they would have difficulties mobilizing their troops for an emergency defense.[106] He would march swiftly and defeat their forces piecemeal before they could assemble a united army. The wagenburg would not only serve as a redoubt for the invading troops but also as a source of supply; the voivode knew that by marching through late autumn and into winter, when the ability to procure supplies locally was limited, the greatest risk to the army would be starvation.

The route the crusaders were to take followed the ancient Roman military road. It was the same path followed by the first crusaders on their way to the Holy Land in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. From Belgrade the army moved into Serbia. There, as Branković had promised, the force was greatly reinforced when "more than 8,000 cavalry and infantry came to the despot. A certain voivode from Bosnia named Peter Cohacz came as well with six or seven hundred cavalrymen."[107] The reinforced army

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[104] *Salsus Lapidis* or "jumping rock" in Długosz. This was directly across from Tüdorév (Tütenrib) which is the crossing point mentioned in Beheim (p. 329). The date is from Sroka, "Itinerarium," p. 161.

[105] This is also mentioned in the Gazavât, p. 8. There has been some debate as to whether the expedition began in September or October. This depends on how one defines the "beginning." The combined army did not leave Belgrade, i.e. Hungarian territory, until after 11 October, though Wladislas and Cesarini left Buda in September.

[106] Some historians argue that Hunyadi purposefully waged winter campaigns with the knowledge that the season made it even more difficult for the Ottomans to mobilize. As this chapter clearly shows, the crusaders had intended for the expedition to get under way much earlier, by mid-summer at the latest. Hunyadi's own correspondence with Branković bears this out as well. Though the winter season made it more difficult for the Ottomans to mobilize, it also exposed the crusader army to harsh weather and a lack of supplies. It was the season, more than any other factor, which doomed the 1443 campaign.

[107] Wolkan, vol. I, pp. 281–283. Beheim says that only 4,500 Serbian cavalry joined the group.

continued onward. Six days after entering Serbia while traveling along the Morava it had its first encounter with the enemy.[108] Scouts reconnoitering the area had discovered a reconnaissance detachment of 300 Turks. These were no doubt attempting to assess the Hungarian army. Hunyadi, informed of the Turkish force, immediately crossed the river with a number of his men and routed the contingent, killing a number of the enemy and seizing some captives. He learned from two of the high-ranking prisoners that the Beylerbey of Rumelia, Kasım Pasha was with a sizeable army only two days' march away.

In the meantime Kasım Pasha, residing in Pirot,[109] had received reports that the crusaders had crossed with a large army into Serbia. He immediately sent word of the invasion to Murad, and then summoned the Rumelian Lords to come to his side as soon as possible. While Kasım Pasha was assembling his men Hunyadi rode forth, hoping to find the beylerbey and defeat him before he could gather his army. Taking 12,000 of the best cavalry and leaving Branković and Wladislas in the camp with

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[108] The Christian narrative chronicles are on the whole a very poor source for these events, and one is forced to rely more on the epistolary sources. For a discussion of Thuróczy's account see below. Długosz's account is obviously based on the letters. The source of the confusing sequence of events may be Wladislas' own letter from 6 November (see footnote below), though the chronicler had at least one other source as well. The Gazavât (pp. 8–10) constitutes an independent and more or less reliable account, which coincides in many details with the several letters sent by Hunyadi and Cesarini. Curiously, the Gazavât does not mention the final and largest encounter. We cannot doubt that this took place, however, as the nine standards which Hunyadi captured as well as the list of captives provided clear evidence to back up his own dispatches. The author of the Gazavât may have ommitted the defeat on purpose, loathe as usual to recount Ottoman failures. Oruç Bey, the anonymous chronicle and Aşıkpaşazâde say nothing of the campaign prior to Zlatitsa. The contemporaneous epistolary sources are therefore by far the best source. Though one might assume Cesarini would exaggerate the victory for propaganda purposes, this does not seem to be the case. In particular, Hunyadi's letter to Ujlaki is to be trusted. Ujlaki's own familiares participated in the battle, which Hunyadi made it a point to tell Ujlaki. It would have been foolish for Hunyadi to then lie to Ujlaki or exaggerate his exploits only to have himself made a fool of and a liar when Ujlaki's men returned to their master's court. In any case, the letters are the following:

A) Hunyadi's letter to the citizens of Braşov dated 6 January 1444 (Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2472, pp. 123–124.)

B) An excerpt from Cesarini's letter to Frederick III from 8 November (Wolkan, vol. II, pp. 281–283. Cesarini's letter is contained in the footnotes. The same letter is found in Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. III, pp. 107–109.)

C) Also Hunyadi's letter to Ujlaki dated 8 November, 1443 (Fejer, *Genus*, pp. 55–58).

[109] Gazavât, p. 8, gives Kasım Pasha's location.

the war wagons[110] he set out in haste to find and defeat Kasım Pasha.[111] Hunyadi knew that it would take time for the Ottomans to mobilize their army, particularly the Provincial Landed Cavalry, and he hoped to defeat the beylerbey while the number of his troops were still reduced. The crusaders soon arrived at the town of Nish, which Hunyadi quickly seized, plundered and burned. Hunyadi camped there and set about determining the location of the Turks.

While waiting for their men to gather, Turahan Bey, Kasım Pasha and those sanjak beys already present met in council to discuss their course of action. It was decided that Kasım Pasha, Turahan Bey and Isa Bey Hasanbeyzade[112] would attack Hunyadi as soon as possible. The rest of the army, comprised of the majority of the Sanjak lords of Rumelia including Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu[113] and Sinan Bey of Kruševac,[114] was to head towards Wladislas' encampment at Sanac and attack the remainder of the cru-

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[110] In his itinerarium Sroka lists Wladislas as being at "Sanac" on 31 October, 1443. Though it was impossible to find this place name, there is a locale named Savac directly on the Morava about 80 km Nortwest of Nish and 40 km North of Kruševac. This would make sense given the dates mentioned, and so I assume that it was here where the king and Branković were in camp with the tabor.

[111] This deployment of the army, with Hunyadi's men in advance of the force in order to reconnoiter and engage the enemy was a tactic the army maintained throughout the campaign, with the order reversed on the march home.

[112] In the Gazavât, only a joint attack between Turahan Bey and Kasım Pasha is mentioned. Yet the same author mentions Isa Bey's assault later on. Hunyadi, in the aforementioned letter to Ujlaki, also mentions that there were three separate contingents. The Gazavât's mention of Isa Bey Hasanbeyzade's presence and eventual martyrdom at this battle are problematic. As Imber himself noticed (Gazavât, p. 94, footnote 15) the same person seems to appear at the battle of Kosovo in 1448 and is described as one of the marcher lords. Indeed, even the Gazavât seems to contradict itself. Having described at length Isa Bey's martyrdom in an earlier chapter, it depicts Murad giving orders to seemingly the same person a year later in 1444 (Gazavât, p. 52; Imber's translation, p. 88). On further investigation it appears the Gazavât is indeed mentioning two separate persons. The confusion arises from the fact that the names are nearly identical, the one being named Isa Bey Hasanbeyzade and the other Isa Bey Hasanbeyoğlu. The difference is simply in the patronymic suffix, i.e. *zade* and *oğlu*, both of which mean "son of." Yet the usage in the Gazavât is consistent, and appears to be a means by which the author himself distinguishes between these two persons with otherwise identical names. The latter Isa Bey, Isa Bey Hasanbeyoğlu, served in 1444 and again in 1448, dying much later in 1476 when he bore the title of Sanjak Governor of Silistre.

[113] This is not reported in the sources, but he was present at the battle of Aleksinac and based on experience and rank would likely have been picked to lead the force.

[114] These names are taken from Hunyadi's list of men involved in the battle (see below). This is most likely the same Sinan Bey that Brocquière met near Kruševac in 1433, and who routed Sigismund's army at Golubac prior to that. He may be the same Sinan Bey mentioned as the Beylerbey of Rumelia on several occasions in the 1430s.

sader army there. Around 2 or 3 November Kasım Pasha, Turahan Bey and Isa Bey Hasanbeyzade moved as planned towards Hunyadi's encampment at Nish.[115] Their plan was to conduct a feigned-retreat ambush, identical to the one used at Tarnovo in 1444.[116] Turahan was supposed to first "show himself to the infidel" and then draw Hunyadi out in pursuit. When Turahan had drawn the enemy to the designated place of ambush Kasım Pasha and Isa Bey Hasanbeyzade would join the attack, surrounding and defeating the crusaders. All agreed this was a good strategy. It was never executed. Hunyadi's scouts first detected Isa Bey's troops and he rode forth with a large force to meet and destroy his contingent.[117] Isa Bey Hasanbeyzade chose to fight rather than run:

> 'I am not running away,' he said, 'I am attacking these infidels who are as low as the dust.' Then he stretched himself like a wounded lion and gave the command. They struck the batons on the war-drums and, with a single, eager cry of 'Allah! Allah!' he hurled himself against that majestic host of accursed infidels. He drove the ranks of unbelievers who are as low as the earth one into the other. But there is a saying: a single stone does not make a wall, and if it does, it does not last. However, that chief among martyrs drew his sword and dealt the infidels who are as low as the dust such blows

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[115] Unnamed in the text of the Gazavât.

[116] For a description of the feigned retreat and ambush tactic see chapter four. For a description of the Turkish victory at Tarnovo, where they employed the same tactic, see chapter seven.

[117] The above is based on a close analysis of the sources, primarily Hunyadi's letter to Ujlaki and the Gazavât. Dąbrowski himelf seemed puzzled by the fact that the Turks, quite proficient at coordinated tactical operations, attacked Hunyadi's camp one at a time instead of coordinating their assault as intended. A close look at Hunyadi's letter, however, reveals no statement from the voivode that the Turks attacked his camp. He simply states that the contingents "appeared" (*apparuit*/*comparuit*) one by one, first Isa Bey, then Kasım, then Turahan, all of whom he routed in succession (in his letter to Braşov, the latter two are reversed in order of mention). Perhaps it was assumed by Dąbrowski and others that the various Turkish contingents "appeared" before the army around Nish, and were seen there by Hunyadi and the main contingent of the army. Yet Hunyadi makes it clear in his letter that the Turks never succeeded in their plan to meet at a certain point and then to make a combined assault. Instead his scouts discovered the several contingents before they could set up and "God disrupted and destroyed their plan." The "appearance" of the various contingents was their appearance to Hunyadi's scouts, which, as we have already mentioned several times, and which will become apparent many more times, were one of his greatest assets. The Turks, who also made extensive use of reconnaissance and intelligence gathering, seem not to have expected this from their Christian enemies, or at least they were careless in their approach. In the Gazavât, Murad II himself scolds Kasım Pasha on this point: "'And you, when you saw that the infidels who are as low as the dust were in overwhelming numbers, what happened? Why did you let yourself be noticed?" This is another indication of Hunyadi's skills as an innovative commander.

> that the blood of the enemy dripped from his elbows. Like a human dragon, if he struck someone once, there was no need to strike again, and there was no one left to beg favors of the surgeon. Fighting like this, he at last drank the sweet draught of martyrdom, and not a single one of the warriors who had entered the battle with him escaped. May God's mercy be upon all of them.[118]

Hunyadi likewise learned from his scouts that Turahan Bey and Kasım Pasha were also in the area. Turahan himself had sent a force forward to reconnoiter Hunyadi's camp the night before and was aware of the size of Hunyadi's army. This, along with information he may have received regarding Isa Bey's rout, seem to have dissuaded Turahan from engaging the crusaders. He retreated in haste before the enemy, abandoning his camp in its entirety. Finally, Hunaydi's scouts detected the approach of Kasım Pasha.[119] The Beylerbey, with no sign of Turahan Bey or Isa Bey, seems also to have denied Hunyadi an engagement, fleeing as Hunyadi's men approached. The forces routed by the crusaders now moved to join the other major force of the Turkish army which was outflanking Hunyadi to the West and heading to Wladislas and Branković's camp at Sanac.

Hunyadi and his men paused in camp near the town of Aleksinac to recover from the previous battle and decide their next course of action. There they learned from scouts that Kasım Pasha and Turahan Bey had joined the other Ottoman contingent and the entire force was now heading north and west in an attempt to outflank Hunyadi and attack the king's contingent. Hunyadi and his men, despite their fatigue, left camp immediately and set out in pursuit. They found the vast force of Turks assembled in the plain west of Aleksinac heading in the direction of Kruševac.[120] In the afternoon of 3 November, as Hunyadi writes, "we saw a great and terrible multitude of the enemy in the plain, such that we felt for a moment concerned." Hunyadi tried to hearten his men and delivered some words of encouragement, referring to their prior victories and appealing to their faith in the rewards to be had for martyrdom.[121] "And

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[118] Gazavat (Imber's translation, p. 49).

[119] Again, it is not certain based on Hunyadi's letters whether after defeating Isa Bey he first rode out to fight Turahan Bey or Kasım Pasha, only that he met them separately and in succession. The order in which he routed these two is not terribly significant to the outcome.

[120] For the determination of this location see Dąbrowski's footnote on p. 124.

[121] Thuróczy's account of the Long March is horribly confused. However, the battle he refers to at the end of his description (pp. 136–138) is almost certainly the battle of Nish, and not the battle of Kunovitsa, which was more of an ambush than a pitched

when he had finished speaking, a column, greater in number than the others, which he had placed under his own leadership, began to move and rush upon the enemy. At this sight, the other columns copied the action of their leader. A battle was joined by both sides, who craved victory, but the fighting was not on equal terms. For the pasha himself and the entire horde of Turks entrusted to his charge turned tail at the very first clash and fled precipitately." Kasım Pasha retreated into the forested mountains near the battlefield, where Hunyadi's men continued to pursue them "until the first hour of the morning."[122]

The Ottoman defeat was significant. According to the crusaders' letters, nine Turkish banners were seized, 2,000 Ottomans were killed and 4,000 captured, including a "number of men of high authority." Among these prisoners was Balaban, a slave of the port and a long-time servant of the sultan.[123] If Wladislas[124] is to be believed a certain Isa

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battle. Certain elements such as the wish to protect the king's camp, the initial fear at the number of Turkish soldiers, the route of the pasha, and the battle beginning in the afternoon and lasting into the night match precisely the accounts of Hunyadi and Cesarini in their letters. In fact, it is nearly certain that he was using these letters as sources along with some other oral sources. That he had access to the latter as well is attested by the story concerning the Hungarian captives released by Murad to go back to Hungary, one of which was likely his own source. At the end of the battle, he incorporates Mahmud Chelebi's capture, which took place at Kunovitsa, confusing this person with Kasım Pasha.

122 Cesarini's letter mentioned above. Hunyadi's letter to Braşov also mentions that he was forced to fight Kasım Pasha's men in the mountains.

123 Hunyadi lists a participant in the battle named Balaban, the Sanjak Lord of Cirmen. This is the "*antiquus bassa*", or "old Pasha" that he mentions he had captured, a fact that is overlooked by most historians. He was the highest-ranking among the prisoners, and therefore it was he who spoke before the King and Hunyadi (see below). The Gazavât, in describing his capture, also states that he was a eunuch (hadım), a fact which was marveled at by the Hungarians and which indicates that he was a Slave of the Porte and had served in the palace. Indeed, Balaban must have been quite old at the time. He had built a mosque in Edirne in 1412, at which time he already held a very high rank. He was governor of Menteshe in 1425 (Aşıkpaşazâde, p. 115), and in the same year he was at the siege of Thessaloniki (İnalcik, *Gazavât*, p. 98). In 1436 he became Governor of Gallipoli (perhaps taking over after Saruca) and in 1439 was in charge of Tokat. This latter duty is particularly interesting, since it is here that Branković's sons were being kept. He died and was buried in Edirne in 1446. Among his accomplishments he built a school in Gallipoli and an Imaret in Edirne in 1442.

124 *Codex Epistolaris Saeculi Decimi Quinti*, vol. 2, pp. 445–446. The date of this letter is "ipso die translacionis beati Adalberti episcopi et martiris," or 20 October, which is the date of Adalbert's translatio in Gniezno and in Krakow. But the date for Adalbert's translation in Gran (Esztergom) and Quinqueecclesia, i.e. in Hungary, is Nov. 6th. The letter is addressed to subjects in both kingdoms, not just Poland (likely several copies were made for distribution). The date of October 20th, the Polish date, is far too early, and has to be rejected outright. Instead, one must hold that the author was writing with

the Hungarian date in mind, i.e. 6 November, which is around the same time that Hunyadi's and Cesarini's letters were written (8 November). The battle, as we know, lasted well into the night. On 4 November, Hunyadi and his men rested at Bolvan castle while they sent messengers to the king to describe the victory. Thus, this letter, which is quite brief and short on details, is the initial letter dispatched concerning the battle, based on the account of the messengers bringing the prisoners and banners to the king, who must have arrived around 4 or 5 November. This was before the king had a chance to move to Hunyadi's camp and speak with the voivode personally, and therefore explains some of the vagaries of the letter as to location, etc.

Confused by the Polish date for Adalbert's translation, but unable to reconcile it with the early date of 20 October, Dąbrowski mistakenly maintains that the letter was written in December, after the battle of Zlatitsa. He bases this off of the date given in Bachmann, in which the date is given as "*tercia die festo beati Luce ewangeliste nunc preteriti*," which would seem to support the date of October 20th. Yet there is a simple explanation for this. As mentioned above, the feast day St. Adalbert's translation differed locally in both Poland (20 October) and Hungary (6 November). The copyist, almost certainly Polish, calculated the date in question based off the Polish date for Adalbert's translation, i.e. 20 October, and not the Hungarian one which would have been used by Wladislas' royal chancellery. In order to rid future readers of the same ambiguity he had encountered, he changed the date to one that would have been universally understood, that is, he used the feast of St. Luke (18 October) as the reference date, which was identical throughout Christendom.

Dąbrowski (see note, p. 126) seems to have overlooked this rather simple explanation and instead maintained that there was an error in Bachmann and the feast day should be "Lucie," not "Luce," which gives the letter the same date as Hunyadi's dispatch from January 6th. But January 6th makes no sense given the text. There is no mention in the letter of the battles of Zlatitsa or Kunovitsa, all of which had taken place by January 6th and which were described in Hunyadi's letter. The letter does, however, mention Balaban Pasha and Isa Bey, both of whom fought and were captured at Nish (see Hunyadi's letters and the Gazavât). Dąbrowski cites as a second point of evidence that Wladislas was headed off to Edirne, as he would have after Zlatitsa (more on this below). Therefore, in his reckoning, this letter must refer to that battle. This is a bit of circular reasoning, for the letter itself is his evidence that they pushed on after Zlatitsa, and the date of the letter is for him proven by the fact that they pushed on after Zlatitsa. What seems most problematic for Dąbrowski is that the king mentions in the letter a battle at Sophia, which by no account took place after Zlatitsa. Instead, the crusaders arrived at Sophia after the earlier battle of Nish. Yet in his letter Wladislas does not write that the battle took place "at" Sophia, but "near" Sophia, "*conflictus idem prope civitatem Zofia*." This makes sense if the letter was, as I believe, simply a piece of propaganda for his subjects in far-away Hungary and Poland regarding Hunyadi's victories at Nish and Aleksinac. Neither of these Bulgarian cities would have been immediately recognizable to Europeans by name. Instead it would make sense to mention the well-known city of Sophia. It is much easier to accept this, i.e. that the battle referred to is that of Nish/Aleksinac, than maintain that the battle referred to in the letter is Zlatitsa, and that the king continued on from that battle further into the Ottoman heartland (again, see below). Indeed, this letter is the basis for the biggest error Dąbrowski commits in his study of the Long March. Based on Wladislas' words in this letter "*procedere disposuimus versus civitatem Andrinopolim*," and believing that the battle described in the letter is the Battle of Zlatitsa, he assumes the Christians drove the Turks away at Zlatitsa and were able to proceed a bit farther on. This was not at all the case, as multiple sources both

Bey[125] was captured as well. While resting at Bolvan castle[126] and waiting for the king and Branković to arrive, Hunyadi interviewed his captives immediately to obtain information about the Ottomans' plans and the

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Ottoman and otherwise confirm. The Christian advance was decisively halted by the Ottomans at Zlatitsa and they were forced to turn back. The details that the letter mentions instead entirely reflect the Battle of Nish. Facts mentioned in the letter, for example that the battle began around noon and lasted for a long time, that Balaban Pasha was captured, and that the men were now ready to head on to Edirne all agree with Hunyadi and Cesarini's letters after the Battle of Nish/Aleksinac. Thus, there can be little doubt that the king is referring in this letter to the battles of Nish/Aleksinac, and that it's date is Nov. 6th. It is worth observing that the king makes no mention of Hunyadi, but rather keeps the author of the victory anonymous. Just as in Długosz, who makes only one reference to Hunyadi in his entire account of the battle (referring instead to the "royal army" as the subject), the reason was likely the letter's purpose, i.e. a piece of self-praise and propaganda for Wladislas' Polish and Hungarian subjects. It is worthwhile to include the whole letter here, the subject of such lengthy discussion above, since it is itself relatively short:

"Wladislas dei gracia Hungarie Polonie Dalmacie Croacie etc. Rex etc. Lithuanieque princeps supremus ac heres Russie fidelibus nostris universis et singulis, prelatis baronibus ac alterius cuiuscumque status hominibus, presentibus visuris, nostrorum Hungarie et Polonie regnorum ubilibet existentibus, salutem et graciam. Deus, cui post nebulas mesticie consolacionis iubar infundere correptis proprium est, submovit illud itineris nostri, quod in regnum Thurcie nobis domino duce proficiscentibus obstaculum erat: harum serie ad vestram perferimus noticiam, quomodo nobis, ipso die translacionis beati Adalberti episcopi et martiris gloriosi regni nostri Polonie patroni congressum cum valida potencia Thurconice gentis cum bascha Burhemben (Balaban Pasha) et Ezemben (Isa Bey, likely Evrenosoğlu) contra nos congregata facientibus et cum eisdem diucius certantibus, placuit deo altissimo, quasi hora prandii conflictus idem prope civitatem Zofie commissus, quod Thurci, salvis hominibus nostris in unum prostrati numero XL milia recederunt, ubi prefatos Burhemben (Balaban) et Ezemben (Isa Bey) detinentes captivos habemus. Agite igitur deo grates et facite fieri processiones, ut dominus deus det nobis prosperum iter ad maiora, capta namque preda et exercitu nostro victualibus habundanter referto procedere disposuimus versus civitatem Andrinopolim. Datum die et loco quibus supra."

[125] Among the participants at Aleksinac Hunyadi lists Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu ("*Ezebeg filius Kwrenycz*"), a literal translation/transliteration of both the name and the patronymic. It is the only name among the list of participants at Aleksinac where Hunyadi gives the patronymic, perhaps to help the reader distinguish him from the other Isa Bey, Isa Bey Hasanbeyzade, who was not captured at Aleksinac but killed in battle, a fact made quite clear in the Gazavât (see above). In his letter Wladislas lists by name only two captives, Balaban Pasha ("*Bascha Burhemben*," the spelling is mangled. It is written more clearly in Hunyadi's letter as Balaben. In any case, the use of the term pasha makes the reference clear) and Isa Bey ("*Ezeben*"). No reference is made to another Isa Bey outside of Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu and Isa Bey Hasanbeyzade, which would suggest that the captive Ezebeg in the king's letter refers to the former. Yet according to Chalkokondyles, Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu was present at Zlatitsa, where he offered advice on the Ottoman strategy.

[126] This place is just east of Aleksinac, formerly known as the "*praesidium pompeii*". See Konstantin Jireček, *Die Heerstrasse von Belgrad nach Constantinopel und die Balkanpässe* (Prague: Tempsky, 1877), p. 87.

whereabouts of the sultan's army. According to the Gazavât, Hunyadi asked Balaban whether the sultan was in Anatolia or Edirne, and whether he intended to fight or flee. Balaban replied:

> At present our Padishah is in Edirne,[127] but do not imagine that he will run away from you. On the contrary, he will order his cavalry to mount up. He will call up several hundred thousand horsemen from Rumelia and block the passes you have come through. So far, you have advanced without trouble, but whether or not you can make it back to your own lands is a different matter. You rely on your carts,[128] but they will surrond you and your wagenburg, as the sea surrounds the world, or like a belt surrounding the waist, and you will perish from grief like a dog...[129]

When Branković and Wladislas arrived at Bolvan castle, around 7 or 8 November, Balaban was brought into an audience with the king and the voivode.[130] He repeated his statement in their presence. At this point, the three main leaders—Branković, the king and Hunyadi—discussed their strategy.[131] Branković wished to turn back. This is understandable since the despot, having already taken back most of Serbia and having valuable captives with which to barter, no doubt felt he could negotiate with the sultan for the return of his despotate. He was not interested in the grander crusade project or even necessarily in driving the Ottomans out of the Balkans, which would only leave him to contend with an even more powerful Hungary.The others, however, were eager to press on. As Hunyadi wrote to Ujlaki on 8 November:

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[127] Murad may have already been in Sophia at the time, or at least he was soon after (see below).

[128] A clear reference to the Hussite tabor, or wagenburg. This passage demonstrates that the tabor was in fact a problem for the Ottomans, who had not yet figured out a means to defeat it.

[129] Gazvat, p. 10 (Imber's translation, pp. 49–50). The account, not to be taken literally, nevertheless corresponds with Hunyadi's letter in which he wrote that he had learned from captives that the sultan was three days' march away.

[130] The Gazavât gives a florid description of this interview. Perhaps Balaban, who died in 1446, was one of the author's sources.

[131] This meeting is reported in the Gazavât, pp. 10–11. We need not dismiss it as complete fiction. Balaban, present at this audience, was likely able to determine the political dispositions of the various parties involved. When he later returned to Edirne (he died there in 1446), he would have no doubt related his story to others, coloring it of course to reflect most positively on himself and his actions. His report of the meeting and the attitudes of the various parties makes perfect sense given other documentary evidence (Hunyadi's letter and the eagerness he displays in it to travel to Edirne and engage the sultan) as well as later events (Branković's zeal and quickness to make peace with the Ottomans once the crusade ended and his lack of participation in 1444, having received his despotate back in negotiations).

> Indeed the sultan Murad is himself no more than three days from us,[132] such that we have no choice but to fight with him. Only God knows the outcome. We are in the hands of God. That which God desires will be done, even if one must die, especially for the Faith. In truth our army is growing daily. Many men have come to the king with gifts: Bulgarians, Bosnians, Albanians and Serbs. They rejoice and are glad that we have come. We have an abundance of food, and we have not yet even touched the food we brought with us in the carts. We have optimal and desirable weather, and great areas to forage.[133]

Hunyadi accused Branković of being too quick to make peace. He pointed out that Branković was still the son-in-law of the sultan, and his motives were inherently suspect. After much deliberation, the war council decided to advance as far as Sophia, and from there decide their next move. The king's army left Bolvan some time after 9 November[134] and moved on to Pirot. There they must have tarried for a while, perhaps foraging for more food and gathering supplies. Cardinal Cesarini was in no less positive a mood than Hunyadi and seemed energized by his role in leading the corps of crusade volunteers. His experience hearkened back to the days when he led such an expedition against the Hussites, and Cesarini must have relished the opportunity to compensate for that ignominious defeat. As Długosz writes: "The zeal of Cardinal Julian [during the campaign] was also noticed. When the troops, and particularly the [volunteer] crusaders, were marching into battle he would go before them and wave the legation's cross fervently, comforting those about to fight with his words."[135] The cardinal also seemed exuberant about the assistance and reinforcements they were receiving from the locals. In his letter of 4 November, he writes with excitement news that the Albanians and the Byzantines were also in arms against the Turks.[136] Cesarini, Wladislas and Hunyadi's letters from early November evince strong opti-

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[132] This must refer to Sophia, where Murad was gathering his forces at the time, and which is nearly 200km from Aleksinac. This would have been hard to reach in three days even if Hunyadi abandoned the tabor and only took his cavalry. But "days march" is intended here as a measure of distance, and not a declaration of intention.

[133] This is an excerpt from Hunyadi's letter to Ujlaki from 8 November, already referenced several times above (Fejer, *Genus*, nr. 12).

[134] Sroka, "Itinerarium," p. 162.

[135] Długosz, p. 286: "Zelus insuper Iuliani cardinalis legati tunc perspectus est, qui exercitum regium et presertim cruce signatos, dum acies ad congrediendum procedebant, animose legacionis crucem gestans ubilibet preibat et milites pugnaturos suis adhortacionibus confortabat."

[136] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. III, pp. 109–110. For more information on Albanian and Byzantine military activities at this time see the next chapter.

mism and a palpable faith in providential support for the crusade. Having routed a large Ottoman force and with the sultan on the run it seemed their plan of striking the Ottomans before they could mobilize was working. They might reach Edirne in a matter of weeks or even days. This optimism carried them forward, despite the warnings of Branković which they dismissed as either cowardice or even treachery. Hunyadi in particular seemed intoxicated by victory in a way seen neither before nor since. Guided by this optimism they marched inexorably onward.

The Ottoman Mobilization

Murad received word of the Hungarian invasion just after the news of his eldest son Ala'eddin's death. The young prince had been Murad's chosen heir and favored by many at court, to include the sultan himself.[137] Events left Murad no time to mourn his loss. He ordered his viziers—Şehabeddin, Fazlullah and Halil Pasha—to begin making preparations. When asked about the mobilization, his men answered that "a good number of your troops from among your slaves—both Janissaries and cavalrymen—have assembled and are at the ready. However, to judge from what Kasım Bey says in his letter, our troops are not equal to the enemy's."[138] The vezirs had mobilized the Slaves of the Porte, which remained constantly present with the sultan and ready to do his bidding.[139] This, plus whatever was left of Kasım Pasha's men would comprise Murad's army for the time being. The vezirs advised the sultan that based on Kasım Pasha's reports, these numbers would be insufficient to face the crusaders. To meet the threat, Murad declared *jihad* against the invaders, obligating all Muslims in his land to join his army. He even seems to have extended the invitation to non-muslims, stating "let everyone in Rumelia who is capable of wielding a mace set out, whether on foot or horseback."[140]

This sort of general mobilization (نفیر عام) was infrequent,[141] and the fact that it was proclaimed speaks to the dire sense of emergency in the

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[137] Giese, p. 67. See also İnalcik, *Fatih Devri*, pp. 55–60.

[138] Gazavât, p. 13 (Imber's translation, p. 51.)

[139] For the approximate size of this force, see chapter four.

[140] Imber's translation, p. 51

[141] The Gazavât (pp. 12–15) gives us a good insight into the process. The sultan issued a declaration, or ferman, stating the obligation of all able-bodied men to participate. This was sent out to kadis, "judges," who were responsible for local administrations. In this case, the ferman states (Gazavât, p. 14; Imber's translation, p. 54): "This holy war (ghaza) is an obligation on all who live in Rumelia, great or small, whether on foot or on horse.

empire. The shortage of troops was a result of several factors—first and foremost a lack of time. Though the Slaves of the Porte constituted in effect a standing army, and could be mobilized with little notice, the vast majority of the Ottoman army was composed of the provincial cavalry serving underneath the various sanjak beys of Anatolia and Rumelia. The mobilization for Mezid Bey's invasion of Hungary and Wallachia in 1442 was announced six months in advance. After his defeat, it had taken Şehabeddin several months to raise yet another army. The sultan was now hoping to mobilize all of Rumelia and Anatolia[142] in a matter of weeks. The mobilization effort was further hindered by the series of defeats the Ottomans had suffered in Rumelia in the last 18 months, and which had resulted in the capture or death of a number of sanjak beys and other key leaders. This had an effect on the provincial cavalry, who were hesistant to fulfill their obligation of military service with the memory of their fallen comrades still fresh. Many of the men had experienced these defeats personally.[143] Another hindrance was the late season. Winter was approaching and the normal campaigning season had ended. Many wished to return to their farms and manage their duties there. Lastly, since it was a defensive campaign, there was very little motivation in terms of plunder or spoils or captives. In short, the risks were great and the gains minimal.

After Murad declared his intention to wage *ghaza*, or holy war,[144] he left Edirne and headed for Sophia accompanied by the Slaves of the Porte and whatever other soldiers had already been mustered. When they reached Asenovgrad,[145] near Plovdiv, Murad ordered Halil Pasha back to

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When my imperial command arrives, you and the agent I am sending should together levy from their houses the inhabitants of each of your judicial districts, and send them quickly to Sophia, the capital of Rumelia. You should not neglect this matter, but act according to my command. It should be known that whoever accompanies us on this victory-crowned campaign and offers assistance out of love for the religion of Islam, my imperial asent has been granted for whatever it is they request. Whatever it is they wish—whether a timar or zeamet, whether a post in the Janissaries or the household cavalry or whether release from yürük status—I have accepted."

142 The main contingent of the provincial cavalry of Anatolia under the command of Mahmud Chelebi did not arrive until after the Battle at Zlatitsa, and was not able to participate until the Battle of Kunovitsa where they were soundly defeated.

143 That the marcher lords were deterred from fear and news of the size and might of the crusaders is stated quite openly in Oruç Bey's chronicle, pp. 63–64.

144 As Imber clarifies in his footnote in the translation (Imber, p. 51): "Islamic jurists classify holy war as an 'act of worship', which to be valid in the eyes of God requires sincerity of intention." Hence Murad's open declaration.

145 This city was formerly named Stanimaka.

Edirne to help ease the increasingly restless citizenry of the capital frightened by the approaching crusader army. Halil was also ordered to oversee the passage of troops from Anatolia to Rumelia and guard against any invasion from the south, i.e. from Byzantium or Karaman. The sultan then continued on to Plovdiv, where he met with his other two viziers, Fazlullah and Şehabeddin. There it was decided to re-issue the summons for the general levy, and then to

> instruct Ozguroğlu to position himself so as to cut off the retreat of the infidels who are as low as the earth. Yahya Bey should station himself on one of the enemy's flanks, and we should position Davud Bey to threaten him from the other. We should block all the passes wherever they are. Then we can stay in Sophia with nothing to worry about until the troops of Anatolia and Rumelia are ready and prepared."[146]

While in Plovdiv the Ottoman forces were augmented by around a thousand Anatolian troops hastily assembled by Saruca Pasha with his own funds. This loyal act of an exiled vezir did not go unnoticed.[147] The Ottomans left Plovdiv and moved in haste to Sophia, hoping to arrive there before the crusaders. The sultan and his army were greeted warmly by the city's inhabitants. Perhaps disappointed by the results of the inital summons, Murad ordered Fazlullah to send out decrees once again to the kadis to hasten the mobilization. He ordered the two viziers to oversee the organization of the enlisted irregulars, i.e. the azabs, serahor and martolos, and to properly pay them, so that they will "not be all mixed up like a black man's hair."[148] He also summoned Ömer Kethüda and Bıçakçı to take command of the azabs.[149] He then issued yet another decree, this time stating: "It should be known that whoever accompanies us on this victory-crowned campaign and offers assistance out of love for the religion of Islam, my imperial assent has been granted for whatever it is they request. Whatever it is they wish—whether a timar or zeamet, whether a post in the janissaries or the household cavalry or whether release from yürük status—I have accepted." The repeated decrees and the generous incentives are an indication of both the Porte's fear and the insufficient

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146 Gazavât, p. 12 (Imber's translation, p. 52).

147 Sadeddin, p. 211. See also chapter seven.

148 As Murad states, it was incumbent on a ruler to provide for the needs of men summoned to jihad.

149 The Gazavât only mentions that these men were summoned. But on the eve of the battle of Zlatitsa, when Murad was speaking to the other *reis*, or azab commanders, he singles out Ömer Kethüda. Gazavât, pp. 14, 22 (Imber's translation, pp. 54, 61). Zaifi mentions the same two men as leading the azabs at the Battle of Varna (Pehlivan, p. 609).

responses to the previous summons. It is unclear how much this helped. Oruç Bey writes that the serahor (akinji and طُوَجبيلر[150]) targeted by these incentives simply took the money and went back to their farms.[151]

Sometime after 22 November the crusader army left Pirot and headed for Sophia to do battle with the sultan's army.[152] Turahan Bey and Kasim Pasha were informed of the enemy's movement. Turahan Bey rode off to Sophia himself to warn the sultan. After his arrival a war council assembled to discuss what to do next. According to the author, Turahan Bey advised retreat, the adoption of a scorched earth policy and reliance on the harsh winter weather and starvation to destroy the crusader army. "My hope is that, when the infidels who are as low as the dust enter the plain of Sofia, a storm will blow up and when they find no shelter, they will lose their hands and feet. After that the matter is simple. If there is no possibility of resisiting them, this is the only solution."[153] The sultan followed the advice, trusting in Turahan's experience as a commander and his reports on the numbers and strength of the enemy. He ordered the citizens of Sophia to pack up their belongings and leave. He then had Kasim Pasha burn the city and the surrounding villages.

Around December 1st the crusaders reached Sophia. In the meantime, Wladislas had ordered letters to be sent to the local populace, informing them that they and their goods would not be touched if they voluntarily provided help to the crusaders.[154] According to the Gazavât: "Most of the people in fact submitted to these accursed men. Some began to bring provisions to sell. Some mounted their horses and acted as guides. In short, that year they paid their *jizya*[155] to the infidels who are as low as the dust,

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[150] According to the glossary found in Imber (p. 205), *dovıcalar* refers to an officer of the akinjis. Unfortunately I have been unable to find a clearer definition elsewhere. At first glance it appears to be a combination of the Arabic verb to volunteer (طوع) and the Turkish suffix of agent (جي). It no doubt refers to some category or rank of troops, and it would seem to refer to an officer of the serahor, as Imber suggests, where the connotation of "volunteer" would be quite appropriate.

[151] Oruç Bey, p. 64. This seems part of the package of criticisms aimed at Turahan Bey throughout the campaign of 1443. Turahan commanded a large contingent of serahor and akinji.

[152] Sroka, "Itinerarium," p. 162. Wladislas issued a document from Pirot on this date.

[153] Imber's translation, p. 55

[154] Gazavât, p. 16. Though this is reported by a Turkish source there is no reason to doubt its veracity. Wladislas issued letters to the local populace in 1444 near Varna (See chapter seven).

[155] The jizya was a tax levied only on non-Muslim subjects.

and many of the subject infidels mounted their horses and joined Yanko's [Hunyadi's] army."[156] Hunyadi formed some of these men into an advanced contingent of scouts, an ideal assignment given their knowledge of the land and the people. This assistance from the local populace may have given the crusaders some solace when they entered the otherwise devastated city. The mosques had been spared. Among these was the Siyavus Pasha mosque. It was immediately restored to its original position as the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia.[157] It was here that the crusaders gathered to hear mass, presided over by the Metropolitan Bishop of Sophia. One can imagine the import such an event had for Cardinal Cesarini. This Holy Mass, presided over by a recently "liberated" Orthodox Bishop and attended by Latin Christians symbolized for Cesarini the entire purpose of the crusade—the expulsion of the Ottomans, the re-establishment of Christendom in the Balkans and the strengthening of the union between the Eastern and Western Churches.

For the Ottomans, of course, the reaction was quite the opposite. Murad was saddened and upset at having ordered the fair city burned.[158] His malaise quickly changed to anger, however, when he learned of the defection of the local populace to the enemy. The sultan took pride in his just treatment of his subjects, a facet of Ottoman rule noted by nearly all who were familiar with or had traveled through Ottoman lands. While discussing the sultan's treatment of Christians Konstantin Mihalović tells a story about how the sultan made it a point to pay just prices for the food provided to his army by Bulgarian Christians while on campaign. He would brook no unwarranted abuses or injustices from his soldiers against his poorer subjects:[159]

> The emperor orders the Christians and they must send after the emperor many thousands of draft animals or horses; they carry food and will sell it where they order them, each on his own account. He sets their price justly, not condoning any harm to them... Under Emperor Murad a certain woman accused an azap of taking her milk without recompense and drinking it on the road. Emperor Murad ordered him seized and his belly cut open. If the milk were found in his stomach, he would be a goner, for he did not

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156 Gazavât, p. 16 (Imber's translation, p. 56).

157 Cvetkova, p. 282, and footnote 78 regarding the church's origins.

158 This is noted by the author of the Gazavât, and is quite in keeping with Murad's sympathetic nature.

159 Mihalović, p. 189. It is quite possible this event occurred while Murad was on campaign in 1443 or 1444, given that the soldier was an azab. These were only called up in times of need. Statements similar to the one here were made by Brocquière, George of Hungary, Pero Tafur and others who knew Murad and Ottoman society first hand.

> own up to it, if however it were not found, then the same thing was to happen to the woman. And thus the poor soldier lost his neck and the woman the milk. And that happened riding from Plovdiv to Chermen.[160]

The sultan's care and protection of his non-christians subjects was given with the explicit condition that they remain loyal. This legal concept or "contract" was known as *zimma* (ذمة) and it was entered into when a non-muslim land surrendered to a Muslim ruler. The non-muslim inhabitants who were not enslaved or killed were known as zimmis (ذمي), and they enjoyed the full extent of protection and care of the state. The protection afforded such persons was not forfeit even if they refused to fulfill their obligations to the state (i.e. the payment of the poll tax or jizya (جزئية)). They would forfeit their protected status, however, by "joining enemy territory or waging war against the Muslims in their own country."[161] In this case, the person or persons are no longer *zimmi* but *harbi* (حربي), i.e. with the same legal status as those living outside the Muslim state, or in the *Dar Al-Harb*. For this reason, Murad's decision to punish and slay those bringing aid to the crusaders was entirely justified by the precepts of Islamic Sharia Law, according to which those Bulgarians aiding the enemy were seen as identical to the enemy himself.

After the Christian army's departure the Pasha of Sophia, who had fled to nearby Radomir when the crusaders approached, now rode back in anger to the city. Breaking in to the re-christened cathedral, he beheaded the bishop and other officials, "gouged out the eyes of the priests, monks and infidels who were inside," and had the severed heads delivered to the sultan. Murad's wrath was equally untempered. In order to punish the betrayal of the Bulgarians as well as to dissuade anyone else from helping the Christian army he ordered what amounted to an akinji raid on his own subjects. He allowed anyone who so wished "to go out and cut off the head of anyone they captured, whether voynuk or subject, who had supplied provisions to the infidels, seize their property and take their women and children prisoner." The author of the Gazavât remarks with thinly-veiled sarcasm the zeal with which these same men, who had only so recently "fled in terror from the infidels... turned into lions, as they set off in every direction. Whenever they reached a village, they slaughtered the men and took the women prisoner. They plundered the provi-

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[160] The author mentions that Mehmet used Murad's treatment of his Christians as a model and basis for his own policy.

[161] Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 1965 (Reprint, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 131.

sions in their stores and seized their property and sustenance." The result, of course, was that the Ottomans were able to seize for themselves the foodstuffs that the Christians would so desperately need on their march home.[162]

The Battle at Zlatitsa Pass

Upon realizing the crusaders' intent to march on the capital the Turks had sent out orders to guard the passes leading to the plain of Edirne and block them with boulders, felled trees and other debris.[163] This succeeded in slowing the enemy's advance, since "before they could cross the mountains, a path had to be cleared by axe-bearers and tree-cutters."[164] Murad sent out a certain Uzunkarıoğlu with a large contingent of two thousand men to observe Hunyadi's movements and report back.[165] However Uzunkarıoğlu was himself captured while trying to seize Hungarian prisoners for questioning and the rest of his men were routed. According to the Gazavât he was captured due to heavy fog and because he fell from his horse. A more likely explanation is contained in the veteran commander's own speech to Hunyadi and the king, who naturally questioned him on the Ottoman army's whereabouts and intentions. In the midst of a long-winded, blustery monologue about the superiority of the Ottoman forces intended to frighten the crusaders, Uzunkarıoğlu makes mention of the tabor: "You rely on your carts, hoping that the House of Osman will attack them so that you can drive them back with cannon and arquebus. But do you not know that they have tumbled to this trick of yours and will not approach the carts? No, they will surround you completely, out of range of the guns, and stay there

[162] There is another, perhaps darker interpretation. The Gazavât may be trying merely to justify Murad's and Turahan's scorched-earth strategy by explaining them as moral vengeance, when in reality these actions were dictated by strategic necessity. However, both are probably true. As Mihalović's quotation above is meant to indicate, Murad did have a strong sense of just patronage towards his subjects, which was to be reciprocated through loyalty. At the same time, one cannot doubt that this comprised part of the strategy to deny supplies to the crusaders and draw them deeper inland.

[163] Chalkokondyles, p. 308. See also Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 120) and others.

[164] Doukas, p. 182.

[165] This reconnaissance force is mentioned both in the Gazavât (p. 19) and Chalkokondyles (p. 308). Chalkokondyles also writes that this force was ordered to guard the passes and obstruct them with debris, though other sources mention this was done by peasants.

until you are reduced to eating one another."[166] The Hussite tabor and the challenge it posed to the Ottoman army is repeated throughout the narrative of the 1443 campaign. It had no doubt posed a problem for Uzunkarıoğlu as well, who in attempting to infiltrate the enemy camp would have been faced with a wall of wagons loaded with soldiers and missile weapons. The tabor served as a mobile fortified camp that prevented the Ottomans from achieving surprise and engaging in the sort of hit-and-run tactics at which they were so proficient. They were still puzzled about how to defeat the tabor, and the tactic anachronistically attributed by the Gazavât to Uzunkarıoğlu was indeed the best solution. It was not used until some five years later at the Second Battle of Kossovo (1448). By that time the Ottomans had developed their own tabor, and essentially besieged the Hungarian wagenburg.

Both the crusaders and Murad realized that if the crusader army could break through the mountains into the plain of Edirne there would be little to stop them from reaching the Ottoman capital. Heeding Turahan Bey's advice they refused to do battle in the open field, for despite the recent arrival of some troops from Anatolia the Ottomans were still not confident in their military superiority. Instead the Ottomans would engage the crusaders in the mountain passes, where they could use time and terrain to their advantage. Murad moved the larger part of his army, including the Janissary Corps, to the place where the crusaders were most likely to attempt to cross—Trajan's Gates.[167] The name derives from the pass's position along the old Roman military road from Constantinople into northern and western Europe, the road which the crusaders had thus far followed. Here the Ottomans could seize the high ground, reduce the enemy's mobility and restrict their ability to deploy the tabor should they attempt a breakthrough. Perhaps sensing Murad's intentions the Christians headed northeast instead in an attempt to cross via Zlatitsa mountain. Murad had already sent Kasim Pasha with a large force to secure this pass, and to report to him on the enemy's movements. When it became apparent that the enemy army would cross there Murad moved his troops north and joined the beylerbey's men.[168]

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[166] Gazavât, p. 19 (Imber's translation, p. 59). True or not, this speech is a reflection of the Ottomans' reaction to their first encounter with Hussite tactics.

[167] To be more specific the janissaries were guarding the pass while Murad was in the nearby town of Vasilitsa some 5km southeast. Chalkokondyles (p. 308) mentions this place name and it is mentioned in the Gazavât as Tanrı Pinar. The Turkish name for the pass near Vasilitsa was the Kapulu, or "gated/closed" pass.

[168] The Gazavât, along with Chalkokondyles, state that Murad and his men moved to the pass at Trajan's Gates. During their narration of the Ottoman/Christian encounter

After the entire army had assembled, the sultan called a war council to decide what to do when the Hungarians arrived. Chalkokondyles provides a long narrative of this meeting.[169] Though the author no doubt embellished their words, the decisions and motivations of the various parties are in accordance with what else we know about their personalities, and the presence at Zlatitsa of the key leaders mentioned by Chalkokondyles is likewise confirmed by other sources. This lends a certain credence to what the Greek historian writes, who himself had spoken to veterans of these campaigns.[170] Addressing the war council Murad encouraged them to offer up any thoughts on how to achieve victory against the invaders. For his part, the sultan advised an immediate attack, for the Ottomans were now superior in number. Kasım Pasha, the Beylerbey of Rumelia, supported this sentiment. "Unless we decide to fight, our strength will pass, weakened by fear of the king. The bravery of the enemy, however, will grow, and their chances of success will increase with every step."[171] Kasım Pasha repeats several arguments along this line,

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they make no actual reference to where the battle occurred, save to say that the Christians crossed the "Sophia river" at German (Gazavât, see below) while returning home. This has led some historians, most notably Bistra Cvetkova, to conclude that the battle took place at Trajan's Gates and not at Zlatitsa. This may have resulted from the fact that Cvetkova did not have the full text of the Gazavât when writing her history, and perhaps did not consult the extremely important epistolary sources or other Ottoman sources. Both the Gazavât and Chalkokondyles present the battle at the "pass" as taking place with both Kasım Pasha and Turahan Bey present. The Gazavât itself (and the Anonymous Chronicle) go on to state that Murad sent Kasım Pasha to secure the pass at Zlatitsa while he himself went to Trajan's Gates. Since the later narrative shows these two fighting together, one must conclude that either Kasım Pasha moved later to Murad's position at Trajan's Gates, or Murad moved to Kasım Pasha's position at Zlatitsa. Nearly every contemporary primary source, Ottoman and Christian, Latin and Greek, state that the battle took place at the Zlatitsa pass. These include but are not limited to: Hunyadi's letter from 6 January , Mihalović, Beheim, Wavrin, Oruç Bey, Aşıkpaşazâde, the Anonymous Chronicle and Doukas. Several of these sources are entirely independent from one another, and almost certainly did not derive their information from a common source. The fact that Chalkokondyles and the Gazavât do not firmly state where the battle took place, and that the other sources all say the battle took place at Zlatitsa, makes it certain that Zlatitsa was indeed the battle site. Once again, the suggestion that the battle took place at Trajan's gates likely stems from the fact that Murad first went here, only later traveling to Zlatitsa.

169 Interestingly, Beheim (p. 330) also mentions the Ottoman council, though it is not certain to which battle he is referring. Yet he does mention the sultan's wish to do battle on account of his superior numbers.

170 These speeches are in Chalkokondyles, pp. 309–313. Chalkokondyles had access to both oral and likely written Ottoman sources. He knew some of the men involved in these battles personally.

171 Ibid., p. 310.

stating that the Ottoman refusal to give battle thus far and merely to block the passes has only emboldened the enemy, who believes the Ottomans are retreating. This policy can only further endanger the army. It is necessary to fight now, and if the sultan would rather sit in the mountains, then Kasım Pasha would be willing to lead the army himself, "and I will whip them such that no other Hungarians or Westerners will in the future dare to wage war on you." Indeed Kasım Pasha's later actions during the campaign confirm the beylerbey's newfound sense of bravado, possibly a compensation for his embarrassing retreat in the face of Hunyadi's men at Nish and Aleksinac.[172]

Next it was Turahan Bey's chance to speak. He was the most experienced military commander of all those present, particularly when it came to fighting the Balkan Christians. It was on his advice that the Ottomans had withdrawn their troops from the plain of Sophia into the mountain passes, waging a scorched-earth campaign instead of open war. Continuing with this strategy he advised against an immediate assault. If Ottomans attacked, he argued, first the Anatolian and then the Rumelian cavalry would flee and only the janissaries would remain.[173] "A bird without either wing is useless"[174] he offered by analogy. Though the janissaries could stand their ground, they were not suited for the encirclement tactics and most importantly the pursuit of the enemy for which the swifter cavalrymen were required. Therefore if the Ottomans attacked, there was a good chance the army would be defeated. He suggested that they retreat even further before the enemy, withdrawing little by little all the while hindering the crusaders' advance as much as possible until such time as the enemy, pressed by hunger, would be forced to turn around. At that point, while the enemy was in flight and heading back through the pass, they would attack him with all their might. Those present agreed that this was a better policy than an immediate direct assault on the plain below.

Finally Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu spoke. He was an experienced commander like Turahan, and like Turahan Bey and Kasım Pasha he had already faced Hunyadi's army earlier in November (see above). On the one hand he recognized the soundness of Turahan Bey's strategy as the safer and more reasonable of the two thus presented. Yet he also argued that, "It does not

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[172] The Gazavât (p. 14) contains a passage in which the sultan personally chides Kasım Pasha for his conduct at those battles, and Kasım Pasha appears riddled with shame.

[173] This is precisely what happened at Varna a year later.

[174] Chalkokondyles, p. 311.

befit you my sultan to retreat, and nor would I advise it."[175] Recognizing the deleterious effect a retreat would have on Ottoman morale, as well as the soundness of Turahan Bey's earlier advice, he argued that they should neither retreat nor advance, but stay entrenched in the pass, waiting for the enemy to either assault them in their fortified position or leave out of hunger. At that point, they would send their cavalry to pursue him and harry them on their route home, thus annihilating the army in retreat. It was agreed that this plan was the most sound of all and it became the overarching Ottoman strategy. The sultan and his men dug in and prepared to meet the coming crusaders.

The strategy proposed by Isa Bey was precisely what the crusaders did not want. It was the middle of the winter and they were already at a high elevation. The Ottomans seemed well-supplied, having seized adequate food and other necessities from the local populace. The crusaders had behind them a desolate trail of destruction, less of their own doing than on account of the Ottomans' scorched-earth policy. Whatever supplies they had would have to last until they had made the long march back into friendly territory. Branković, having guessed the Turkish strategy, argued that the crusaders should turn back. But the king, Hunyadi and no doubt Cesarini as well wished to press on. They had come so far, and had yet to engage the sultan's main army. If they could achieve a victory against this host and break through the pass at Zlatitsa nothing would stand between them and Edirne, where they could winter in comfort in the sultan's own harem.

The crusaders set out from Sophia on or after 4 December[176] and arrived at Zlatitsa eight days later.[177] They waited at the entrance to the

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[175] Ibid., p. 313.

[176] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 39, pp. 79–85. According to this letter Cesarini wrote to the Senate on 4 December from Sophia.

[177] The main problem with dating this battle is that the primary source for establishing the chronology of the campaign, Hunyadi's war dispatch to Braşov from 6 January (Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2472, pp. 123–124), contains a 4.3 cm gap in the text of the document at the time the events that follow would have occurred. This is a significant portion of text. The location of the gap is shown in the following excerpt from the letter:

"Notabiliores autem et signatiores iam pridem contra solum Omorath Turcorum summum imperatorem et universos suos principes damnatae conditionis eius quoque potentiam validissimam, et de Romani et de Natulya neve partibus transmarinis conductam atque comportatam feria quinta proxima ante festum beatae Luciae virginis (12 December 1443) *in arco et* <Here is the 4.3 centimeter gap, followed by> montium loci ac silvis Zlatitsa vocati." A number of historians assume the date of 12 December in the above text refers to the battle, but this is not at all clear. Beheim writes that the

pass for several days, hoping to entice the Turks out of their fortified positions.[178] Yet Murad held his troops back, resisting the temptation that he had expressed in the war council to leave the high ground and attack the invaders. Finally, the crusaders had no choice but to try and dislodge the Turks and break through the pass into the open plain.[179] With Hunyadi in

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Christians waited before the pass for three days before attacking. In the Gazavât, the Christians attack immediately, and there are two days of battle. Does Hunyadi say that they arrived at the pass on the twelfth, and then a day or two later they attacked? Or that they arrived on the twelfth, and the battle lasted two more days? It is impossible to know without the assistance of another manuscript including the lost portion of text and therefore I am hesitant to say that the battle took place on precisely this day.

[178] Aşıkpaşazâde (p. 142) suggests that the crusaders entered the pass, yet Oruç Bey, p. 64, makes it quite clear that Murad had set up his troops at the "head of the pass" and that the battle took place there only when the crusaders tried to pass through (çıkacakları vakt). Likely Murad and his men were stationed just inside the pass. This positioning, with Murad's men on the hillside near the entrance to the pass and the crusaders camped on the plain just before the pass is also suggested by Doukas (pp. 182–183): "The Turks succeeded in crossing the rugged mountainous terrain, and arrived opposite the Hungarian encampment, but they did not descend into the plain because they were afraid."

[179] Aside from the approximate date of the battle (see above) Hunyadi's letter of 6 January (Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2472, pp. 123–124) is of little help for determining the events of this battle, due to the already mentioned gap in the text. One is forced to rely on the chronicles. Thuróczy confines himself to narrating the Battle of Nish/Aleksinac, as mentioned above, and does not have much to say about the actual Battle of Zlatitsa. Wavrin's account is utterly confused in regards to the events of 1443 and therefore entirely unreliable. He seems to refer to several of the battles simultaneously and out of order. This is true for Beheim to a large extent as well. He confuses Halil Pasha with his brother, Mahmud Chelebi, whom he seems to assign the role of Beylerbey (as does Długosz). He seems to narrate part of the Battle of Kunovitsa (after which Chelebi was captured) before the Battle of Zlatitsa. Lines 171- 250 in Beheim form something of a narrative of the battle at Zlatitsa, yet a number of elements are introduced from other battles on the campaign. Długosz's account (pp. 285–286) follows directly on the heels of what seems to be a reference to the Battle of Aleksinac or Kunovitsa, quite similar to Beheim. He, as well as Beheim, refer to the battle of Zlatitsa as taking place on Christmas Eve, which was in fact the date of the battle of Melshtitsa as made clear by Hunyadi's dispatch to Braşov on 6 January (Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2472, pp. 123–124). Yet from the line in Długosz's text beginning (p. 285) "Sed nec illisce Wladislas rex passus est eos esse quietos, insecutus enim illos usque ad moncium radices..." the chronicle is discussing the battle at Zlatitsa pass. Mihalović also narrates part of the 1443 campaign, overlooking Nish and Aleksinac and beginning with Zlatitsa. He writes, similar to the Turkish chronicles, that the battle began when the Christians tried to march through the pass. Oruç Bey and Aşıkpaşazâde provide a very similar narrative, with Aşıkpaşazâde stating that the crusaders first entered the pass, then sat and waited for several days while the sultan held his men back, and then the crusaders merely turned around (no mention of a battle in the pass). Oruç Bey (p. 64) is quite specific that the battle took place at the head of the pass and only when the Christians tried to enter and move through ("*çıkacakları vakt*"). This seems much more plausible and tactically sound. Thus the basis for my narrative is primarily the Gazavât (pp. 22–25) along with the afore-

the lead and Wladislas marching behind the army moved in to storm the Turkish position. "In an attempt to drive their ranks out of the mountains with fire from mortars (bombards) and crossbows and other missiles, he [Wladislas] laid low many Turks who were struck with cannonballs. But the Turks were no less aggressive as they savagely attacked the king, their bravery aided by their higher location, and they struck the king's army with arrows, which they fired like a sudden, swift cloud. " Both Hunyadi and Wladislas, as well as other knights were spared much of the damage from the arrows on account of their plated armor.[180] Yet the Turks had arquebuses as well.[181] During the fighting a lead bullet struck Hunyadi's horse knocking him to the ground, whereupon his men quickly gathered around him to prevent the Turks from seizing their commander. The fighting was terrible on both sides, yet the crusaders could make no headway against the Ottoman infantry. "As the azabs and janissaries gathered in one place and fought valiantly for the sake of Islam, the accursed Yanko saw that there was no way forward."[182]

It must have been a despondent moment. Many of the crusaders' hopes hinged on breaking through to the plain where they might find relatively abundant supplies and winter quarters, not to mention achieving their goal of seizing the Ottoman capital. Yet the Turks had effectively halted their advance. There was no way forward. With the harshness of winter upon them they could not afford to stay in that place any longer, and that night it was decided that Wladislas and a large contingent of the army would begin its retreat. Unable to turn the wagons around or deploy them in the pass they were forced to pull them backwards.[183] When they reached the entrance to the pass once again, they deployed the wagenburg in full on the right hand side of the valley entrance.[184] If the Gazavât

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mentioned passages in Długosz, Beheim, Oruç Bey and Aşıkpaşazâde and a few words in Chalkokondyles (p. 313) and Mihalović (p. 65).

[180] This is recorded in both Długosz and the Gazavât. Doukas (pp. 182–183) also makes mention of the arrows' ineffectiveness: "The Turks poured down an endless shower of missiles but without effect."

[181] The Gazavât mentions that the Turks had arquebuses. The Czech chronicler Hajek (Jirececk, "Válečníci," p. 159) mentions that "the Turks had cannons, but not very many."

[182] Gazavât (Imber's translation, p. 60).

[183] Jireček, "Válečníci," p. 159. Mihalović, p. 65.

[184] Jireček, "Válečníci," p. 159.

is to be believed, Hunyadi stayed behind in the pass to act as a shield, guard the king's exit and keep the Turks off-balance.[185]

When the morning came the Turks were still present.[186] Now was the time to advance upon the retreating enemy. The Ottomans began once again raining arrows and bullets down on Hunyadi and his men. Soon after the azabs and janissaries began their advance. The Hungarians fled from the pass and took shelter in the king's tabor. The Ottomans pursued. Turahan Bey ran to the sultan, desperately warning him to call off the attack:

> Now at this moment Turahan Bey appeared before the Padishah and, bowing his head to the ground, said: 'My Padishah, the infidels who are as low as the dust have withdrawn their troops to the carts and are standing ready to fight to the death. Give the command to the troops of Islam to retreat, because if we attack the infidels, they will dig in between the carts and kill our soldiers with cannon and arquebus fire. Then things will become difficult for us.' His words persuaded the Padishah, and the Padishah the Refuge of the World ordered the sergeants (çavuş) to go between the ranks and to turn back the troops of Islam just as the infidels who are as low as the dust were at their last gasp.[187]

Having called off the attack on the wagenburg, the standoff lasted until sunset. The crusaders then departed under cover of night and began their long march home.

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[185] This two-part retreat, related in the Gazavât, is confirmed by Hunyadi's own report of their tactics upon returning home (see below), in which he explicitly states that he provided a rearguard at some distance from the king with a large force of infantry and cavalry.

[186] At least the infantry (azabs and janissaries) was. Aşıkpaşazâde (p. 142) suggests that Branković had bribed the sanjak lords. In the Gazavât (Imber's translation, p. 62), there is an interesting scene related by the author in which he first offers words of encouragement to his infantry (azabs and janissaries) and then calls all the sanjak beys before him. The author writes, "But however much the Padishah of the World admonished these men, not one of them spoke a word or uttered a sound. They simply stood looking at one another. When the Padishah of the World saw them like this, he knew that no good would come of them and so raised his face to the throne of God and offered a silent prayer, thinking in his heart: 'If my slaves the Janissaries and Azabs stand firm, the enemy—God willing—will be routed. God willing, when this affair is over, I shall punish these Lords. I shall execute some and others I will banish.' This is a reflection of Murad's disappointment with the performance of the sanjak lords throughout the campaign. This same frustration with the performance of the sanjak beys and the provincial cavalry appears in Oruç Bey's chronicle (p. 62). None of the Turkish chroniclers, however, state that the provincial cavalry abandoned the battlefield. Yet one must wonder what the source was of Murad's frustration. Did it relate to the events of the following day, when Turahan refused to assault the tabor?

[187] Gazavât (Imber's translation, p. 62).

The March Home

Traveling back westward and into the plain of Sophia they took a route slightly different than the one by which they had come. Instead of moving straight west they moved to the southern end of the valley, crossing over the bridge at German, and then moving through another set of mountains into the valley and plain where Pernik and Brevnik are located. It is impossible to tell what motivated this slightly more indirect route home, but one can guess that it had something to do with the devastation the Turks had wrought on the towns in the plain of Sophia and the obstacles they had set up expecting the king's return along that route. The crusaders were in need of food and supplies, and they may have thought they could obtain them in the Brevnik valley, which had been spared the sultan's scorched earth campaign.[188] In this valley, near the town of Melshtitsa,[189] the sultan finally caught up with the retreating army.

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[188] The route is discernible by the places where the battles took place (Melshtitsa and Kunovitsa) as well as the information in the Gazavât that the crusaders crossed at German. However, the latter source's chronology for the crusader retreat is oversimplified. Regarding the initial withdrawal from Zlatitsa the source simply writes: "Ammâ küffâr-i hâkisâr fırsatı ganîmet bilüb ol gece oradan kalkub ve *German* köyünden Sofya suyunu geçüb kondu, ve ertesi gün eğlenmeyüb gene gitti." I have italicized the word "German," because in İnalcik's transliteration (Gazavât, p. 23, the Ottoman Turkish text is on p. 21a of the manuscript at the end of the book) and in Imber's translation (p. 62) it is transcribed as "Kerman," interpreting the Ottoman Turkish letter ك as a "K." However it is possible in this case to transliterate the letter ك as either a "K" or a "G". I was not able to find a "Kerman" in all of Bulgaria, but there is in fact a village named "German" just southeast of Sophia right along the river. This must be the crossing point referred to. Hajek's chronicle (Jirececk, "Válečníci," p. 159) mentions that the crusaders crossed the river near Sophia at a bridge. And indeed there was a bridge at German. The pace the Gazavât suggests for the Christian army is quite incredible. According to the author, the army traveled 77km within the first 24 hours, meaning the crusaders would have had to have marched the entire night and until sunset of the next day after just finishing a battle. This distance could only have been covered if the men were mounted or transported in the wagons. The men then would have set up camp, and the next day traveled around 47km more to Melshtitsa, where the next battle is to have taken place. Not only is this pace incredible to believe, it does not make sense with the dates of the battles. Since the Battle of Melshtitsa took place on Christmas Eve, that would require that the battle at Zlatitsa take place on 22 December, a long time after the date of 12 December mentioned in Hunyadi's letter. If we accept that the date of the army's retreat from Zlatitsa was around 15–16 December, and that it took them 8–9 days to reach Melshtitsa (around 14km per day), then it would indicate a more deliberate pace for the army's return. The Gazavât makes it very clear that Ottoman footsoldiers were present at Melshtitsa, which is most likely why the sultan, reliant on his janissaries and not trusting the provincial cavalry, was unable to pursue the Christians more swiftly.

[189] This place name is given clearly in Hunyadi's letter, as is the date of the battle. Dąbrowski, p. 128, says that Melshtitsa is 30km west of Sophia. The Gazavât also suggests

Hunyadi and his men, still forming the rearguard, warned the king that the sultan was about to overtake them. He moved his men swiftly to join the king.[190] Wladislas formed up the tabor and prepared to fight. The description in the Gazavât that follows typifies Hussite tabor tactics. When the Ottomans appeared the cavalry rushed out of the tabor to assault the Turks and lure them into range of the guns and crossbows. The plan worked, and the Ottomans began to assault the wagenburg from the high ground. The Czech cavalry then retreated back to the tabor with the Ottomans following close behind. The men in the war wagons readied their weapons, prepared to mow down the advancing Ottoman troops. Once again, Turahan Bey stepped in to avert disaster.

> "My Padishah,' he said, 'order the troops of Islam to withdraw from this wagenburg. These accursed infidels are treacherous, and unless our men withdraw, they will fire their guns, the troops of Islam will be routed, and those accursed men will sally forth from the wagenburg and set upon us. Then what will we have to defend ouselves with against all of them?' When he had spoken, the Padishah replied: Turahan, what you say is wrong. I can see with my own eyes tht the enemy does not have the strength to fire either cannon or arquebus. You are out of your mind.' To this Turahan replied: 'My Padishah, cut off my head so that I do not have to witness this disgrace before I die. I know how the thing will end. Look, my Padishah, there is no one older than me among your lords. There may be one among your Anatolian slaves, but they do not know the treachery and deceitfulness of these infidels. My Padishah, you cannot strike the target with hope alone. The wise act slowly and with caution, the foolish in anger and in haste. Think what this will lead to, my Padishah. You will suffer for this, or you will unless you let the words of this old man be your sovereign remedy.'"[191]

Once again Murad, ready and eager to fight the enemy, was held back by Turahan's level head and experience. The author of the Gazavât, critical of the marcher lords and the provincial cavalry, condemned Turahan for the cautionary advice he repeatedly offered the sultan, accusing him instead of being in league with the enemy. This accusation arose due to later events, when Turahan was scapegoated for the capture of Mahmud Chelebi at the Battle of Kunovitsa. The author writes that Turahan had some ulterior motive in halting the army's advance upon the tabor, both

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that this encounter took place west of Sophia. I was unable to locate this place name on any map, however.

[190] The Gazavât (p. 23) says that Hunyadi was present. It seems more likely that the charge out of the tabor was led by the rittmeister, Jenik z Meckova.

[191] Gazavât, p. 23 (Imber's translation, p. 63).

at the battles of Melshtitsa and Zlatitsa. Yet the author, through the earlier speeches of Uzunkarıoğlu and Turahan Bey himself makes very clear reference to the dangers the tabor presented to the Ottoman army. Turahan's assessment was of course entirely accurate. The crusaders hoped that the Ottomans would do precisely what Murad wanted and lead an assault on the wagenburg. The result would have been the same as with every other army. The fortified defenders would have unleashed their combined missile and gunfire on the attackers, who upon weakening and fleeing would be mowed down by the Czech cavalry exiting the wagenburg in pursuit. Turahan Bey was no traitor, on the contrary his experience and military savvy saved the Ottoman army from disaster more than once in 1443.

With the Ottomans unwilling to assault the tabor the battle at Melshtitsa proved indecisive. The crusader army continued home, marching through the Dragoman pass into the plain of Pirot.[192] Meanwhile Murad had dispatched a force of cavalry to pursue the crusaders; he himself went back to Sophia. The pursuit force was composed of Kasım Pasha and the men under his standard, Turahan Bey with the "Army of Thessaly,"[193] and Mahmud Chelebi[194] with seven banners of recently arrived troops from Anatolia. Wladislas and Branković had moved ahead and entered the plain of Pirot. Hunyadi[195] continued to provide the rearguard, "as we are

[192] The Battle at Kunovitsa is fairly easy to narrate based on four main sources, all of which more or less agree in their account of the events. The first is Hunyadi's oft-mentioned war dispatch to Braşov from 6 January (Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2472, pp. 123–124). He allots a good portion of the text of this letter to the narration of this battle. The second is *Chalkokondyles*, pp. 314–315. The third and fourth are Czech sources found in Jireček's "Válečníci," which offers a dramatic first-hand account by a participant in the battle, and finally Hunyadi's oft-mentioned letter found in Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2472, pp. 123–124.

[193] The akinji and others accustomed to fighting with him in Macedonia, Albania and Northern Greece.

[194] Brother of Halil Pasha. Christian sources consistently refer to him as Mahmud Pasha from Bursa. As the Gazavât mentioned earlier, Halil Pasha had been sent back to Edirne in part to organize and dispatch the troops from Anatolia. It is logical to assume that unable or unwilling to go himself he gave his brother the responsibility of assembling and leading the Anatolian contingents. In any case, Hunyadi states clearly in his 6 January letter (Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, nr. 2472, pp. 123–124) that Mahmud was commanding ("praefectus, director et belliductor") the newly-arrived Anatolian forces.

[195] In Mihalović's account Branković leads the rearguard. Yet this author fails to mention Hunyadi's presence at all during the campaign, making his assertion regarding Branković somewhat suspect, particularly when other sources are clear that it was Hunyadi. Mihalović's account is nearly identical with that of Hajek (Jirececk, "Válečníci," p. 159), suggesting that one is based off the other or the two had a common source. Hajek makes no mention of Hunyadi either. This bias against the Hungarian commander had

accustomed, in order to protect and ward off the traps and predations of the enemy, like a shepherd watching his flock of sheep."[196] He and the crusaders left Pirot and headed along the old Roman military road towards Nish.[197]

The Turks stopped before entering the pass and held a council.[198] Turahan advocated sending men forward along a road to the north of the village of Dragoman, and to move forward warily in their pursuit of the army which he knew from experience was more than capable of setting ambushes and employing other stratagems.[199] The others thought they should pursue the enemy as quickly as possible, perhaps fearing they might not catch the crusaders before they reached Branković's lands in Serbia. Turahan Bey warned them against this, stating that the Hungarians were looking for a battle and would take any opportunity to draw the

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much to do with contemporary politics in Bohemia, which were unfavorable towards Hunyadi's son Matthew Corvinus, then King of Hungary. Hunyadi's letter, however, and the Gazavât (p. 22) strongly suggest that Hunyadi was in the rearguard, perhaps along with Branković.

196 Hunyadi's letter to Braşov from January 6th. The Hungarians had adopted this strategy at least as early as 1437 during the raid on Kruševac, see chapter three.

197 Chalkokondyles, pp. 314–315, tells the story of how Turahan Bey left Kasım Pasha and his men and took the high road through the mountains when the others insisted on heading forward through open ground. The Gazavât reverses the roles in the story. It is Turahan who is incautious about the enemy and leads the army into the ambush. Here, Chalkokondyles is to be believed. Oruç Bey (pp. 63–64), the Anonymous Chronicle (p. 67) and others all indicate that Turahan "did not accompany" Kasim Pasha, for which he was later upbraided and even imprisoned. Indeed, the fact that he did not proceed through the passes was the main "evidence" that Turahan Bey was "working with the enemy" and informing them of the Ottoman's locations and intentions. The Gazavât's motivations in changing the story are easy to guess. Throughout its narrative the Gazavât is interested in slandering Turahan Bey and the marcher lords. It therefore attempts to blame Turahan Bey for the tactical mistake of walking into the ambush, despite the fact that in every previous engagement Turahan Bey is presented in the Gazavât as being cautious to a fault. The real purpose of this passage in the Gazavât is to exhonerate Mahmud, the sultan's son-in-law and even more so Halil Pasha, Mahmud's brother. It was Mahmud, along with Kasım Pasha, who made the tactical error of directly pursuing the Christians into the passes and falling into the ambush as Chalkokondyles clearly indicates. Kasım Pasha attempted to blame his own folly on Turahan Bey, whom he accused of abandoning the main force and collaborating with the enemy. The Christian sources, however, contain no evidence of such collaboration, and Hunyadi's tactics here are quite in keeping with his tactics in general, a fact which Turahan Bey was aware of, but which his less experienced comrades were not.

198 Chalkokondyles, pp. 314–315. His source, as before, was most likely someone in Turahan Bey's army who had witnessed these events. It may have even been Turahan Bey himself. The Gazavât says this meeting took place before the Dragoman Pass, but in fact the battle took place on the next pass leading from the plain of Pirot towards Nish.

199 Most likely the road leading to Prekraste.

Turks into a fight. "The Hungarians will not suffer our pursuit of them. Nor will they abstain from battle simply because they are retreating. The Hungarians are gnashing their teeth [in frustration] that we will not descend into the plain and fight them there." It is better, he argued, to follow the army from the mountains, waiting for the right opportunity to strike. Yet the others continued to insist that the Hungarians were in flight and were not willing to do battle. Perhaps they believed that Turahan, who had pursued a cautious strategy against the Christians thus far and denied the Ottomans an open engagement, was simply a coward, or even worse a collaborator. Yet Turahan was unwilling to follow them into what he cleary sensed was an ambush. He made the bold, essentially insubordinate, but ultimately wiser decision of leading his troops through the mountains and around the passes, leaving the others to do as they saw fit.

The Hungarians had in the meantime advanced well into the pass. Hunyadi (and/or Branković)[200] learned from scouts that the Turks were close behind and intending to attack his men. He sent a messenger forward to warn the king that the Turks were in pursuit. Wladislas ordered the infantry to stay with the wagons and rode himself with 1,500 cavalrymen, compromised mostly of Czech mercenaries, to seize the heights near the mountain village of Kunovitsa.[201] On 2 January, as the Ottoman cavalry was making its way through the pass in pursuit of the crusaders' rearguard, the cavalrymen opened fire with their arquebuses.[202] The entire center column of the Turkish army immediately fled. The two flanks remained, but as they turned to face the gunfire the Ottoman horses doubled up on one another, becoming immobile and thus an easy target for the Czech cavalry. Beating drums and sounding trumpets the crusaders charged down the hill and routed the Ottoman flanks. Many of

[200] Branković may have been in the rearguard as well.

[201] The best source for the events that follow is a brief Czech chronicle published by Jireček ("Válečníci," pp. 158–159). The chronicle appears to be written by one of the participants in the battle, perhaps by Jenik z Meckova himself, and the fact that it corresponds to both Hunyadi's and the Gazavât's account make it highly trustworthy. The four assaults Hunyadi mentions in his letter are discussed in detail in the chronicle, and a good deal of other information is imparted as well concerning the tabor. The king's presence at the battle of Kunovitsa is not only mentioned by the Czech Chronicle, but also by Hunyadi in a later letter (Katona, p. 263): "Quando superioribus annis,—Bulgarico bello Turcas ingenti strage, primo ad Moravam fluvium, deinde ad Cunovizam, praesente D. rege, profligavimus, capto ipsi exercitus Turcici duce Hasambego."

[202] The use of firearms in the ambush is mentioned by both the Czech chronicler (Jirececk, "Válečníci," p. 158) and the Gazavât.

the Turkish cavalrymen scattered and lost their way, stumbling and falling in the thick underbrush. It was here that one of the leaders, Mahmud Chelebi, was captured.[203] The crusaders continued in pursuit. "While attacking them we chased them to a river, and this river was as deep as a horse's belly. And they went into this water and there were about 5,000 horses, all stopped, and they defended themselves from the river. Once again we attacked them without mercy, and once again they scattered before us." The crusaders then chased the fleeing enemy for a long while (Hunyadi wrote that the pursuit lasted until four in the morning) until they reached a meadow where the Turkish tents and main camp were located. The crusaders' infiltration of the camp remained unnoticed until the crusaders began firing in their midst and banging drums and blowing trumpets, all of which caused a great upheaval and commotion. At this point, however, they began to fear they had happened upon the headquarters of the Turkish army and the sultan himself[204] and decided to return back to the crusader camp in haste. Upon their return, Wladislas knighted a number of the men. They then surveyed the captives and divided up the rich spoils.

The biggest prize, of course, was Mahmud Chelebi. Not only was he the sultan's son-in-law, he was the brother of Grand Vizier Halil Pasha, the most powerful official in the empire. He constituted by far the most important prisoner the crusaders had seized during the campaign. The Gazavât tells us that Branković sought at this point to ingratiate himself to Mahmud, ordering that he be given his own tent and clothing befitting his rank. The author goes on to describe a scene in Branković's tent in which Branković "was hatching a plot," telling Mahmud that he would soon re-unite him with his family and his people. This episode need not be taken literally, but it is indicative of the separate and independent negotiations conducted by Branković which played a key role later on in the peace negotiations that summer. Branković knew that Halil Pasha was a man who could be dealt with diplomatically. The prisoners taken on the campaign, and in particular Mahmud, would be the key bargaining chip for the despot to regain the lands he had lost in 1439.

Meanwhile Kasim Pasha had made his way to the sultan's camp and reported the news of the defeat.[205] Upon hearing that the majority of the

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[203] The Gazavât (Imber's translation, p. 64) describes this as an "inhospitaple place which he (Mahmud Pasha) could not cross on horseback."

[204] As mentioned earlier the sultan was in Sophia at the time.

[205] Gazavât, p. 28 (Imber's translation, p. 67).

Anatolian soldiers had fled the battle and returned safe and sound, Murad ordered them to be punished as cowards. "Some of them had their hair and beards shaved off, and some had their fiefs confiscated and given to others. Each one of them was humiliated in some way or another."[206] Yet the greater part of his wrath was reserved for Turahan Bey. Halil Pasha was incensed that Turahan Bey had "abandoned" his brother, who had in turn been captured. According to Chalkokondyles, he incited the king against the marcher lord. "The sultan pronounced with grave demeanor that Turahan had not set out with the Beylerbey of Rumelia, but had taken another road and therefore betrayed the Rumelian army. He seized him and sent him in chains to Tokat prison in Asia. Halil Pasha did not cease to augment the sultan's wrath, and had it recorded that Turahan, while residing in Vidin near the Danube, had become friends with Branković. He said that Turahan, moved by this friendship, wished to help [Branković]. Having accepted gifts from Branković he promised that he would offer his assistance in any way possible." Halil's accusations were circumstantial and without basis,[207] motivated by anger over his brother's capture. But the Grand Vezir also realized that if Turahan and his treachery were not to blame for the defeat, then that meant his brother was. It was much easier to make the marcher lord the scapegoat, rather than negatively affect his own and his brother's careers.

The victory at Kunovitsa may have heartened the crusader army, but their joy quickly faded as they resumed the long, arduous march home. The Ottoman strategy advocated by Turahan now began to take its toll. Deep in the mounains in the dead of winter, with no provisions left and little possibility for forage, the army began to suffer from the weather, lack of food, and general fatigue. The chroniclers, Ottoman and Christian, are unanimous in their description of this horrific march. As Długosz writes:

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[206] Ibid.

[207] An indication that the parties were not working together is clear in the epistolary sources from the campaign. In his letter to Branković from June (see above), Hunyadi notes with no small satisfaction that Turahan Bey was sick and bed-ridden in Smederevo, and forced to leave the defense of Serbia to his relatives. The Czech chronicle regarding the battle of Kunovitsa (Jirecek, "Válečníci," p. 158) records with pride false rumors that Turahan Bey had been killed in the battle (given rise to by Turahan Bey's absence in the fighting). Hunyadi's description of the encounter with Turahan Bey at Nish makes no mention of any sort of collaboration or bargaining, and Turahan Bey is listed as an enemy leader along with Kasım Pasha.

> A large part of the king's army was killed off by hunger and fell in heaps. Some of the soldiers staggered hither and thither, falling again and again as they marched. A great number were so emaciated that they resembled more fleshless skeletons than men, with a foul complexion and eyes downcast. Nor was one able to bring assistance to another in overcoming such travails. The gold offered by the despot,[208] although at first it seemed a great quantity, once it was dispersed amongst everyone it was not able to provide for the needs of the individuals.[209] In order to shorten the journey home the king ordered all the heavy baggage to be cast aside. Horses weakened dead from hunger and many wagons with grandiose tents were burned. Armor and other weapons were buried deep in the ground and certain pieces that were more for display than practicality were consumed by fire so that the Turk would not get a hold of and arm himself with them. Grandiose tents, wagons, saddles, clothing and other things which could not be transported on account of the lack of horses were likewise burned.[210]

The army crossed over to the western bank of the Morava and continued into the plain of Dobrogic,[211] near the city of Prokuplje, where in the lands of the despot, safe from the pursuit of the Ottomans, they found at least a modicum of rest. Hunyadi dispatched his oft-cited letter on 6 January from this camp. The idea was debated whether or not to spend the rest of the winter in Serbia, and lead another expedition immediately in the coming spring. Branković was the strongest advocated of this plan, hoping to retain the crusaders in Serbia for at least "four sundays" and thereby strengthen his bargaining position with the sultan. For this purpose he dispensed the funds Długosz mentioned in the above passage. Official negotiations with the sultan had already begun before the army reentered Hungary. According to Mihalović, while still in Serbia, "A message came from the Turkish Emperor that if he [the king] would release to him those captive lords whom he had, he would return to the Despot Smederevo with all its fortresses and the whole Raskan (Serbian) land and also both his sons Gregory and Stephen."[212] The future of these negotiations will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[208] According to Hajek's chronicle Branković disbursed 40,000 florints to the army, in part in order to encourage the king to stay in Serbia longer.

[209] The Czech chronicle says that a single loaf of bread cost one florint.

[210] Długosz, p. 287. According to the Czech chronicles (Jirecek, "Válečníci," p. 159) only 50 of the original 600 war wagons made it back.

[211] Mihalović, p. 67.

[212] Mihalović, p. 67. The presence of a Turkish diplomat in the crusader's camp is found in Hajek's chronicle. (Jireček, "Válečníci," p. 159). These two sources do not

The army decided to wait no longer but return home. They reached Kruševac[213] by 13 January,[214] and made it to Jagodin a week later. On 22 January they arrived in Belgrade, back in Hungarian territory. Here, the king and his army rested for several days, at least until 26 January.[215] By 2 February he and his army had made their way back to Buda.[216] The residents of the capital rushed out to greet their king and his men, singing hymns of triumph as they entered the city with the soldiers brandishing the standards they had captured and displaying the spoils of war still remaining after the Long March.[217] Their joy was tempered by the toll the journey home had taken on the army. As Wavrin wrote: "The Legate, the King and all who survived returned to Hungary, to Buda, in two contrasting states: one in joy and exaltation for the great victory won against the Turks, and the other in mourning for their friends who had perished as martyrs amidst the snow and ice."

corroborate one another as strongly as one might think, since either Mihalović's account was based on Hajek's chronicle or they share a mutual source.

213 According to Neşri, p. 645, the crusaders had seized this city early on in the campaign.

214 Sroka, "Itinerarium," p. 162.

215 Ibid.

216 Ibid. Sroka lists the king as being in Buda on 2 February.

217 Długosz, p. 287.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CRUSADE OF 1444

After the Long March

Success breeds success, and nowhere was this more true than in the Christian-Ottoman conflict of the mid-fifteenth century. But was the Long March a success? The crusaders failed to achieve their stated goal of seizing the capital and driving the Ottomans from Europe. Yet the army had won several important victories at Nish, Aleksinac, Melshtitsa and Kunovitsa. The most significant confrontation at Zlatitsa was not a triumph for either side, but ended in a stalemate. Though the crusaders were unable to force their way into the plain of Edirne, the Ottoman plan to annihilate the army in retreat was also unsuccessful. Yet the nightmarish march took its own horrific toll on the crusader army. Both sides had learned important lessons about themselves and the enemy. For the crusaders, the key to success in 1443 had been to engage the Ottomans before they could mobilize, constantly advancing and denying the Ottomans a chance to regroup and consolidate. This had to some extent negated the disappointing lack of a fleet presence to block the straits. The Army of Rumelia had been slow and reluctant to assemble, and the provincial cavalry of Anatolia did not mobilize in time to make much of a contribution to the campaign.

The Christian plan, however, had been to use the fleet not only to bar the Anatolian provincial cavalry from entering Rumelia, but also to cut off access to the larger part of the sultan's Army of the Porte, which should have been busy fighting Ibrahim Bey in Anatolia. Had this been achieved, and had Murad and the janissaries and the majority of the Army of the Porte not been present in Rumelia in 1443 it is hard to believe that the expedition would have failed. The absence of the fleet was indicative of another problem—the difficulty in the fifteenth century of coordinating multi-national land and sea operations over great distances, a problem that would plague the army in 1444 as well. It was the Church's job to coordinate these combined operations and it failed miserably. The same was true of the attempt to work in unison with Karaman. The Byzantines had assumed the coordinating role in this instance, but like the pope they

were hampered by their inability to ensure when and if the two sides would act. The crusaders also learned the logistical limits of waging a winter campaign in the Balkans. The tabor and its wagons, which were among other things meant to mitigate the logistical problems of 1443, had trouble passing through the mountains and simply could not hold enough food to sustain the army indefinitely. The crusaders would never again attempt to dislodge the sultan and his army from the Balkan passes in mid-winter.

The Ottomans had succeeded in halting the Christians' advance, but their morale had been shaken by the invasion. On 23 December the Venetian bailey of Corfu wrote to the senate that "on account of the victory and successes of the Christian army against the Turks, these Turks are in great fear."[1] Through sound strategy and optimal use of weather and terrain they prevented the crusaders from reaching the capital. But they also paid a severe price. The sultan had ravaged his own people and burnt his own cities. Whether partially motivated by a sense of treason or not, these actions were quite damaging to a government that won the loyalty of a largely foreign populace first and foremost through just patronage. The Turkish populations were likewise troubled. Halil Pasha had been sent to Edirne in 1443 to calm the anxiety in the capital. One has to wonder if the source of this anxiety was as much Ottoman policy as it was the crusaders' actual invasion, with the citizens fearing the fate of Sophia in the event of an Ottoman retreat. These actions had been forced upon the Ottomans by the inability to mobilize the necessary troops in time to counter the crusader threat. Indeed, one can notice a number of parallels between Murad's predicament in 1443 and Albert's in 1439. Both had resorted to the summons of a levy to meet an immediate emergency and in both cases the results were disappointing, even paralyzing. The essential difference, of course, was that the sultan still had the Army of the Porte as well as a great deal more of disposable money to spend on recruitment. In any case, the Ottomans seem to have learned their lesson. The mobilization in 1444 was much swifter.

If the campaign of 1443 can be labeled a crusader victory it was a Pyrrhic one at best. The strategic gains were modest given the immense effort and funds put into organizing and waging the campaign. The expedition's most significant achievement was the reinstatement of Branković

[1] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. III, p. 145. He goes on to advise the senate that should the Christian successes continue they might be able to deal with local Turkish officials to obtain several territories for the Republic.

in Serbia. Yet as we shall see, the Hungarians did not find a new ally in the despot, but merely regained their buffer state. Branković would help keep the akinji at arm's length, but he had no intention of joining an offensive campaign and confronting the Ottomans even indirectly.

But when calculating a victory one has to consider more than just the strategic and political dimension; there is an emotional aspect as well. It was here that the crusaders intended to capitalize. Before, during and after the campaign the crusaders did everything they could to nurture and spread the growing legend surrounding the king and Hunyadi and their seemingly invincible army.[2] It was for this reason that letters were written and distributed so quickly after each successful battle. Many of these were sent to Ragusa first, from where they were distributed to the remainder of Europe. The letters included partial, and sometimes exaggerated information giving rise to wild rumors. As late as 7 February, i.e. five days after Wladislas had returned to Buda, Giovanni Campisio stated that the crusaders had not only reduced Sophia to ashes, which had long since been reported, but that it was rumored they had taken Edirne itself. The sultan, he wrote, had been put to flight and was still fleeing.[3] There was no room in these exaggerated reports for the setbacks the army had experienced or the glaring fact that they had failed to achieve their stated goal. As Wavrin writes regarding Cesarini's delegation to Rome after the crusaders' return: "[It was decided that] in every place he (Cesarini) passed through, he should announce the great victories that he and the king had won against the Turks. However, he was to keep quiet about the losses that the Christians had suffered in the mountains, contradicting anyone who said anything about them."[4]

Early news of "victory" palpably influenced plans to put together the coalition fleet. Under the impression that the crusaders were on their way to Edirne and that the expedition would continue in the spring, Eugene IV began urgently in December 1443 to assemble a fleet to support the army which he thought would soon reach the straits. On 17 December he wrote to Ragusa,[5] apologizing for the debacle in the previous year's preparations, stating, "May God spare those who ruined such good." He

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[2] For a more thorough discussion of the international reaction to Varna see Grabski, pp. 396–402.

[3] Wolkan, vol. 1, pp. 307–308. The letter is dated much later, but the section containing this information was written on 7 February, as the author of the letter himself reports.

[4] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 121).

[5] Gelcich, pp. 448–450.

pledged all the funds the papacy had outside of those necessary for its upkeep in Italy in order to see the expedition through. He remained optimistic about the support of western Christendom. "Among those who will help are our dear sons in Christ Alphonso of Aragon, Henry of England, both illustrious kings, the Dukes of Burgundy and Milan, the Genoese and we also hope the Venetians." Eugene asked Ragusa to offer two of the five available ships they had in port, which the papacy would pay to have armed. On February 4, 1444, the Ragusans wrote back, improving on the popes's request and offering "two galleys armed at our own expense for the coming summer, so long as the fleet, excepting our ships, should number at least 12 vessels."[6] The city-state's own optimism regarding the fleet, its operations in the coming year, and the "almighty and inconquerable" land army is clear in this letter.[7] If the fleet should be in place "before the land army should move to battle the enemy, having invested the straits the Barbarians will be separated from one another and cut off from the Christian land army."[8]

The optimistic letters distributed by the crusaders after the Battle of Nish/Aleksinac had a clear effect on the Venetians as well. The Republic seems to have come to the realization as early as December that if the land expedition should succeed, they stood to make solid gains in the Mediterranean at the expense of their rivals.[9] Within a month they were sending out urgent letters to mobilize a number of ships and as late as February 6th a letter[10] was sent instructing vessels to head to the straits and keep the Turks from crossing over into Asia. The same letter gave instructions to seize Gallipoli and other territories in the straits, as well as to feel out the situation in Thessaloniki with an eye to regaining that city as well. They had also decided to send a representative to meet up with Wladislas and coordinate operations should the king and his army soon appear at the straits. The Venetians did not neglect to inform Francesco Condulmer, the Papal legate responsible for assembling the fleet, of their newfound zeal for the expedition, even scolding him for a perceived lack of urgency.[11]

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[6] Ibid., p. 453.

[7] Ibid. "Quod si anno isto mediocris classis ad strictam Caliepoli Romanie affuisset, omnino nephanda Macchometti secta destructa extitisset, curante potentissimo et invictissimo terrestri Christianorum exercitu."

[8] Ibid., p. 452.

[9] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, p. 145.

[10] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 34, pp. 72–74.

[11] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, pp. 148–149.

This all came to nought when the king appeared in Buda in February with the disheveled remnants of his army. Soon after, the Republic was once again reminding others that they had a peace treaty with the Turks, yet with the interesting addendum that "this peace is a little bit in question, as it is hoped, with the assistance of the almighty and the necessary contributions of Christendom, that the Turk will pass away from Europe."[12] Indeed, the Venetians were under the impression that the follow-up invasion would take place in the coming spring, and they seemed willing to join.[13]

Further evidence that the Long March, despite its ultimate failure, had caused a change of heart in the Serenissima was the decision to dispatch a military liaison to the Hungarian court. In March 1444, John de Reguardatis was sent to Buda to coordinate fleet operations and to keep the Republic informed of developments regarding the land army.[14] The most important breakthrough occurred in March, when the Republic decided to yield on the question of the tithe and allow the funds collected in the Republic to be used to arm the ten papal vessels Eugene had requested in 1443. These ships comprised the largest contingent in the fleet.[15] On 23 March, they ordered Reguardatis to assure the king and Branković that in the event of a land expedition the fleet would do its part "and block the Turks from crossing into Europe from Asia."[16]

The other major interest in the fleet came from Burgundy. The duke had sidelined the project in 1443 both because the other parties had shown no real initiative and because he himself was occupied in Luxembourg, but he had not abandoned the idea altogether. Already in the autumn of 1443, perhaps at the instance of the pope, he suggested the idea of a Holy League between himself and Alfonso of Aragon.[17] Just as

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[12] Ibid., pp. 153–154.

[13] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 41, p. 89: "[Wladislas] se et ipsum exercitum retrahere, et ad propria remeare deliberavit, cum intentione tamen sicut fertur tempore veris proximi, novum exercitum restaurandi, et rursus adversus iamdictos immanissimos teucros in eorum excidium redeundi."

[14] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nrs. 30 and 31 and the end of 32, pp. 66–67.

[15] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, p. 162. 1,200 ducats, which were collected by the tithe on the territory of the Republic, were disbursed to Francesco Condulmer to use for arming the galleys, "de ratione denariorum exactorum a clero … , cum hoc quod ipsi denarii in reditu galearum predictarum per nostrum Commune exbursentur, pro dando refusuras." The money was to be be given to the managers of the Arsenal, who were to pay amends of 500 ducats each if they used the money for anything else.

[16] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 39, p. 84.

[17] My main source here as well as for much of what follows is Paviot, *Les ducs*, pp. 98–103.

elsewhere, it was reports of the crusader victories that sparked renewed interest in the enterprise. In late January 1444, the duke sent an emissary to the pope and to the King of Aragon to discuss the issue. Other letters in January to Geoffrey de Thoisy and in February to Eugene IV "regarding certain secret matters" also likely dealt with the crusade.[18] The duke had decided, on Walerin de Wavrin's advice, to prepare for the expedition with the help of the Venetians whose Arsenal could swiftly arm the Burgundian ships. Four ships had been sent to Venice for this purpose and the duke inquired as to their status in March, not failing to ask about the papal ships as well. Venice informed the duke that the Burgundian vessels had been armed and they were in the process of arming the ten papal vessels as well. They likewise reported Cardinal Condulmer's arrival in the city, to supervise and if need be expedite the preparations. When asked about the other members of the coalition the Venetians said they had heard nothing from the other Italian city-states alleged to be participants in the fleet. "But we are able to inform your Excellency that these ten armed vessels from the pope, as well as the four from Your Highness, will suffice for guarding the Straits of Gallipoli and preventing the infidel Turks from crossing."[19] They mentioned the other necessary component to the expedition's success—the land expedition, and informed the duke that the crusaders had been forced to retreat that winter "on account of the lack of food in a pillaged country." They also reported Cesarini's expected arrival in Venice. All further news would be communicated to Philip's envoy, the Lord of Wavrin, who was to arrive in the Republic shortly.[20]

News of a crusader "victory" in late 1443 and the expectation that the army would reach Edirne prompted the Byzantines to take action as well. The emperor was fully aware that the Latin Christians did not intend to walk away from victory empty-handed. The Ragusans were hoping to come away with the Albanian cities Valona and Kanina.[21] The Venetians

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[18] Ibid., p. 99.

[19] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 41, pp. 87–88. The Venetians go on to make another auspicious statement, that will take on greater importance given the events that would occur in the fall: "Pro quanto autem tempore classis ista stipendiari debeat a certo dici non posset, nam secundum prosperos, aut tardos rerum successus, tam maritimos, quam terrestres, classis ista maritima, et celerius et tardius perficere poterit opus suum."

[20] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. III, p. 163

[21] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. II, p. 401 (footnote). Ownership of these cities would ensure wheat exports to Ragusa. (Barisa Krekic, "Dubrovnik's Participation in the War Against the Ottomans in 1443 and 1444," in *Dubrovnik, Italy and the Balkans in the late Middle Ages* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), pp. 1–13). This article is more or less a

desired even more, hoping to regain the trading posts in the Morea and the Aegean they had lost to the Turks over the last century. Cesarini's offer of Bulgaria to John Hunyadi indicates that the land army was planning on retaining some of its conquests as well.

John VIII, as well as the recently appointed despot of the entire Morea, Constantine Dragas, had the difficult task of encouraging the crusade while at the same time ensuring that the Byzantines did not lose all reconquered territories to the potential victors. The only real way to lay claim to territory was to seize it themselves. On 10 October Constantine Dragas left Constantinople and headed to the Morea, in effect exchanging appanages with his brother Theodore who was to assume duties in Selybria. Constantine arrived in the Morean capital of Mistras on 8 December,[22] and immediately beginning preparations for an offensive.

Cyriac of Ancona personally alerted Constantine of the startling Christian successes at Nish and Aleksinac sometime between mid-December 1443 and late January 1444,[23] spurring the Byzantines to undertake their own military action against the Turks. This included informing Constantine Dragas of the "recent developments." In December and even early January news had not yet spread about the crusaders' setback at Zlatitsa.[24] The "recent developments" Cyriac had to report were that the Ottomans had taken flight and that the crusaders were likely to reach Edirne, possibly even the straits. As mentioned above, the Byzantines had

summary analysis of documents from Ragusa's archives. In terms of a wider analysis of these events, however, the article is full of errors and quite misleading in key areas where it is clear the author did not draw comparatively on other sources.

[22] Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vol. 2, p. 464.

[23] In a letter sent soon after February 26, 1444 (Bodnar, nr. 1), Cyriac informs the Emperor that he had visited Ragusa and seen letters reporting the victory. He left there sometime after 3 December, since the letter he wrote to Cesarini (Bodnar, nr. 2) on that day was sent from Ragusa. At the behest of the Ragusans, he carried letters to John VIII and his brothers, the despots Theodore and Constantine, in order to "spur a willing horse" to action against the Turks. When he arrived at Patras in the Pelopponesus (after 3 December and before mid-February, likely mid-January) he "wrote immediately" to Constantine to inform him of events regarding the crusade expedition. Later, arriving at Corinth, Cyriac learned that Constantine had gathered a large army and was intending to invade Boeotia. Thebes, meanwhile, had already surrendered. He personally observed that the Hexamilion had been rebuilt. It had been completed roughly at the same time as his visit (*Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, vol. 1, chronicle 67, entry 49, p. 251).

[24] Even the Venetians, who through their various outposts in the Mediterranean were quite well informed, thought that the expedition was going to go through the winter and into spring of the next year, and that the Christians, if they had retreated at all, had not retreated far.

already been preparing for offensive operations. As Cesarini wrote in a letter from 8 November 1443:

> We have other good news as well, Dragas, brother of the Byzantine emperor, has gone from Constantinople to the Morea. Seeing how the power of these barbarians has dissipated, he is now preparing for war against them, and he is gathering his people together with the intention of waging war against the Turks. For having first seen the Hungarian army successfully wage war, thus the remaining lords of Albania and Greece are preparing themselves and they would choose none other, than as one to go against these savage enemies of Christ and in turn to commit themselves to fierce battle with valorous and indefatigable men, which thing the most high mercy of God would seem to concede.[25]

Cyicac's letter confirms this, and adds that Thomas Paleologus had joined in the preparations as well. Like the Venetians, the Byzantines were operating off the assumption, communicated in the overly-optimistic letters sent out after the Battle of Aleksinac, that the crusaders would be victorious and seize Edirne. This prompted them to grab as much territory as they could while the Turks were distracted and the Venetians were unable to seize it themselves. Constantine's first step was to solicit the local rulers, with whose aid he set about rebuilding the Hexamilion wall.[26] This fortification extended across the Isthmus of Corinth and consisted of a seven-kilometer-long, thickly fortified wall with 153 towers and several forts. It was first built by John VIII's father, Manuel, in 1415 on the foundations of an earlier wall built by Emperor Justinian and later destroyed.[27] Manning the fortress seemed to present a larger problem than the actual construction. In 1423 the Turks overran and destroyed it. It was rebuilt. Then in 1431, under the leadership of Turahan Bey, the Turks assaulted and tore down the fortification once again. According to a prophecy from

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[25] Wolkan, vol. 1, p. 283.

[26] See Małgorzata Dąbrowska, "Hexamilion a Warna," in *Balcanica Posnaniensa* VIII (1997): 61–70. I do not agree with many of the author's viewpoints in the beginning of this article, e.g. that a crusade expedition was not in the interests of Byzantium. Her arguments as to why the Greek letter sent to Wladislas in the summer of 1444 was not written by the Byzantines are not well-supported (other arguments exist, see chapter seven). There are chronological errors as well. The author maintains that Sphrantzes traveled to meet with Cesarini and Loredano in February 1444. The text (Sphrantzes, 54) makes it clear that Sphrantzes undertook this delegation after his arrival in Mistra on June 3. The cardinal legate Sphrantzes was trying to join up with was not Cesarini but Condulmer, the papal legate to the fleet, who the chronicler makes clear had recently arrived in Mistra with the ships. The article does, however, provide a good summary of the history of the Hexamilion wall.

[27] Ibid., p. 66.

the Delphine oracle the Greeks would build a wall across the isthmus four times and three times it would be torn down, but after the fourth construction the wall would succeed in holding back the enemy. In the spring of 1444 Constantine Dragas constructed the fourth Hexamilion, in the hopes that the prophecy would prove true.[28]

Having rebuilt the Hexamilion and gathered an army, Constantine moved on to offensive operations in either late February or early March 1444. A decade prior Turahan had pre-empted Constantine in occupying Thebes and Athens after the ruling dynasty of these cities died out. The Turks installed a new local tyrant, beholden to them. Constantine now moved to regain these cities and a number of others in Boeotia and Attica.[29] The tyrant of Athens agreed to pay tribute to Constantine, and Thebes surrendered to Dragas before the main army had even left the Peloponnesus.[30] Having regained control over much of Achaea, Attica and Boeotia, Dragas must have been surprised to learn that the crusaders had not reached Edirne as expected. The news that another expedition would soon be under way in the spring likely assuaged the despot's fear of an imminent Ottoman reprisal. Turahan Bey's arrest and imprisonment was comforting news as well. Turahan's son Ömer, however, proved no less warlike than his father. At the head of his father's army he savagely plundered Thebes and Attica as punishment for their defection.[31] This prompted Nerio Acciaiuoli, the despot of Athens who had recently surrendered to Dragas, to pledge allegiance once again to the Turks and pay them his tribute. Ömer was unable to break through the Hexamilion into the Peloponnesus where Dragas and his supporters sought refuge. Turahan pleaded with Murad to release him so he could personally conduct operations in the peninsula, but to no effect.[32] The sultan had more pressing problems to contend with.

The Christian "victory" and the propaganda surrounding it not only succeeded in winning support from old allies but gained entirely new ones as well. One of these was King Stephen of Bosnia, who had sought

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[28] According to *Byzantnische Kleinchroniken* number 33, entry 49, p. 251, Constantine Dragas rebuilt the Hexamilion in March 1443. The same source mentions that Constantine seized Thebes, the "seven gates" and plundered Libadeia, Zeitunion and marched up to Agrapha.

[29] The best source for these events is Chalkokondyles, pp. 318–321. The dates and timeline, however, are better established by Cyriac's correspondence (see above note).

[30] See the above letter from Cyriac.

[31] Chalkokondyles, p. 320.

[32] Ibid., p. 322.

assistance from Venice as recently as February against both the Hungarians and the Turks.[33] He decided in June, shortly after the Royal Diet in Buda, that he would pay tribute to the Hungarians, not the Turks, and that he would be a "friend and helper in all things."[34] The same was true of Vlad Dracul. Having remained aloof from the conflict in 1443 in honor of his agreement with Murad he too re-entered the crusader alliance. The *cordon sanitaire* of buffer-states which had been demolished by the Ottomans from 1437 onwards was on the verge of being re-established, thanks to the largely successful military campaigns of Wladislas, Cesarini and Hunyadi.

The most significant potential for assistance was from Albania. After the Battle of Nish Cesarini mentioned in his victory letters the Albanian rebel George Arianiti.[35] Arianiti had led the insurrection of 1433–1435, and was a long-time adversary of Ottoman rule. In August of 1443, perhaps at the instigation of Eugene IV,[36] or perhaps merely reacting to news of Şehabeddin's defeat, Arianiti took up arms once again.[37] Yet it was the crusader victory at Nish in November which gave birth to the career of the most celebrated national hero in Albanian history—George Skanderbeg.[38] His given Christian name was George Kastriota, but having been raised at the Ottoman court he converted to Islam. He rose through the Ottoman ranks based on demonstrated military ability and soon became known as Iskender Bey, or Lord Alexander (from which "Skanderbeg"

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[33] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, p. 154.

[34] Acta Bosnae, p. 185. Stephen offered this tribute and allegiance to Hunyadi, in part as thanks for helping place him achieve the Bosnian throne.

[35] The successor to Andre Thopia, who ruled Albania at the time of the insurrection against and defeat of the Turks in 1432. The Aranitis were the second of two branches of the Thopia family. They were characterized by their marriages with the Comnenes, as opposed to the Thopias without a surname, who were married with the Angevins and Dukes of Naples. Since 1423 George had recognized Ottoman suzerainty, and had likely resided at the sultan's court. From there he left to return to Albania in 1427. From 1433–1435 he led the anti-Ottoman insurrection.

[36] There is a receipt of payment to Bishop Cristoforo from 21 February 1443 (Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 2, p. 21) of funds that were to be paid over to George Araniti's chaplain, a certain Stefano de Jacomis de Dulcinio, who was returning at that time to Albania. It is not certain what his role was, but he may have been used by the pope to encourage Araniti to join the coalition and revolt. The fact that this revolt occurred in August may be due to the same sort of miscommunication and lack of timing that resulted in the failed insurrections of Ibrahim Bey.

[37] Jireček, p. 183, footnote 3. Francisc Pall, "Skanderbeg et Janco de Hunedoara (Jean Hunyadi)," *Studia Albanica*, nr. 1 (1968): 104.

[38] See J. Hauziński, "Faktor Albański a Krucjata Warneńska," in *Balcanica Posnaniensa* VIII (1997): 51–60.

derives). From 1438 onwards he was given territories to govern in Albania, his homeland. Beginning in 1440 he was already working secretly on ways to overthrow Ottoman rule in Albania and seize power for himself.[39] When Hunyadi invaded in 1443 Skanderbeg joined the Rumelian contingents from the Sanjak of Arnavid, but during the battle of Aleksinac he gave his men the order to withdraw. He sent his cousin forward to seize Dibra, and he himself swiftly marched to take Cruj. After seizing the city he dispelled the Ottoman military and religious officials. On 28 November 1443, he proclaimed Albania an independent republic and the insurrection rapidly began to spread.[40]

From December 1443, through January 1444, Skanderbeg seized a number of castles from the Turks. In the spring of 1444 the leaders of the various Albanian factions, including George Araniti, rallied around Skanderbeg and formed the so-called League of Alessio, whose purpose was to join forces in fighting the Ottomans and achieve Albanian independence. The Ottomans were left with only limited resources to react to this insurrection. In June, after the peace treaty with the Hungarians had been settled in Edirne, they sent Ali Pasha at the head of a sizeable force to quell the insurrection. The Ottomans were dramatically defeated at the Battle of Domosdova.[41] Like Hunyadi Skanderbeg's familiarity with Ottoman tactics and talents as a commander made him a formidable enemy, and he continued to defy the Ottomans for years to come.

Wladislas' Position in Hungary

The crusaders' purported success impacted not only Hungary's international standing and prospects for a future expedition, it also affected Wladislas' reputation and position both within Hungary and in Christendom. Already in December the celebrated humanist and orientalist Cyriac of Ancona, having seen letters in Ragusa announcing the November victories at Nish and Aleksinac, wrote a letter[42] of praise to the participants of the expedition. He addressed Cesarini as an angelic "caesar,"[43]and referred to Wladislas as the king who the Sybil had prophesied would ulti-

[39] Ibid., pp. 52–53. He had communicated with Alfonso of Aragon on this matter.
[40] Ibid., p. 53.
[41] Ibid., p. 55.
[42] Bodnar, letter nr. 2.
[43] A reference to Cesarini's title, as Cardinal of San Angelo, and of course a reference to his last name as well.

mately defeat the "Parthians." He does not neglect Hunyadi, whose military genius "has so subdued the long-ingrained arrogance of a cruel and dangerous foe of our nurturing faith, that the name of the savage prince Murad Bey, which, only a short while ago was spoken in fear by Christians, is today seen and held to be [the name of one who] turned back in abject flight, and on the brink of annihilation." He even had kind words for Branković, and did not hesitate to praise Eugene IV for his wisdom in appointing Cesarini to act as legate to the expedition.

The monarchs of the Christian world showered Wladislas with praise upon his return to Buda. Letters and delegations arrived from the rulers of France, England, Spain, Burgundy and the city-states of Italy to congratulate the king and encourage him to undertake a second expedition.[44] Francesco Filelfo composed a letter on behalf of the Duke of Milan recalling how only three years ago the Turks had been pillaging Hungary and contemplating the conquest of the West. Yet on account of the king's adolescent verve, tempered by faith and care for his people, this situation had been reversed. Wladislas, according to Filelfo, was the one chosen by God to protect the people of the faith. The letter contained compliments for Hunyadi as well.[45] As for the cardinal, he called him a new Moses, a true hinge (*cardinem*) of the church. He praises Cesarini's honest virtues, sincere piety and great advocacy of the Christian Church.[46] A letter from the Venetian Christoper Cocco also called Cesarini a new Moses, associating Wladislas with the biblical hero Gidian waging war against the Midianites.[47] Wladislas received more than just letters. In March of 1444 Eugene IV sent the king a blessed sword and hat in view of his title of defender of the church and the faith. The sword alone was worth 120 gold florints.[48]

There were some, however, who had mixed feelings about the Long March. First and foremost were the Habsburgs. Piccolomini, who was running the Austrian chancellery in Schlick's absence, rejoiced in public at the news of the crusaders' victories.[49] Yet in private they were the cause of concern. Both he and Schlick realized that Wladislas' success could

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[44] Długosz, p. 290.

[45] Długosz, p. 293: "[*Deus*] duces dedit, qui exercitui preessent, rei militaris peritissimos, milites, qui et ducibus parerent et disciplinam optime tenerent militarem."

[46] Ibid.

[47] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, pp. 157–160.

[48] Dąbrowski, 133; Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 2, p. 22.

[49] For example in his letter to Giovanni Campisio, dated 15 January 1444 (Wolkan, vol. I, nr. 117, pp. 278–283), he writes positively of the outcome of the battle of Nish and expresses to his friend the hope that the crusaders would be driven from Europe.

only hurt Frederick's interests. As he wrote in a letter to Schlick on 11 December, 1443, not long after hearing of the victories in November:

> Fortune, which had shown us a bland expression because she was not well-received, is now flashing us her hiney and ridiculing us like a monkey. I believe that it will be necessary, as you have written, to make provision for matters in Hungary. The King of Poland[50] has not turned back at all, as you judged, but rather he progresses farther each day with the cardinal and the fates, the avengers of our own idleness, trailing in his wake. He is waging successful battles, his fame is growing, and he is confirming his position in the kingdom. I think there is nothing more prudent now to do than to sign a treaty with him through the mediation of Cardinal Cesarini, a most prudent man.[51]

One of the methods used to counter Wladislas' fame and the corresponding increase in his authority was to spread the rumor that the victories were due entirely to Hunyadi, suggesting the king had played a minor role if any. Długosz mentions this disparaging tactic in his chronicle:

> Although the victory Wladislas had won against the Turks was celebrated and praised by all of Christendom with immense joy, there were some who were his enemies and who begrudged him, particularly among the Austrians and the Germans. They tried to diminish and darken the fame of his triumph, asserting that the voivode John Hunyadi, as one experienced in warfare, had prosecuted this war, and that Wladislas played no role in these victories other than that of an onlooker.[52]

Długosz singles out Piccolomini and his role in this propaganda war, a reference as much to the author's later works as to his correspondence at the time.[53] A letter written by a German (perhaps another member of the order) to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights in February of 1444

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[50] That is, Wladislas. The Habsburgs were careful never to refer to him as the King of Hungary, a title which they reserved for Ladislas alone.

[51] Wolkan, vol. I, nr. 117, pp. 278–283.

[52] Długosz, p. 288.

[53] Ibid.: "Sed et Eneas de Senis Italus, poeta laureatus, qui ea tempestate aput Fridericum Romanorum regem notarii oficio fungebatur, gratitudinem aput Almanos consecuturus, multis probris regem Wladislaum carpsit et quem celotenus effere debuerat, triumphorum suorum cumulum et gloriam extenuare laborabat, plur affingens et variis suis epistolis inserens, que decus regium et virtutem suam heroicam expilabant." The most damning extant example of this is a letter from Piccolomini in 1445 (Wolkan, vol. 1, nr. 192). His comments are eerily similar to Długosz' own words: "sed hujus victorie preter auspicium nichil ad eum pertinuit, nam solus Johannes, vaivoda Transsilvanus rei militaria peritissimus, cum decem millibus expeditorum militum hoc bellum confecit." To be fair to Piccolomini he seems to be only referring to the battle of Nish, in which case his comments are true, and he does not seem to have been well-informed of the other battles.

states that the Hungarians won three battles, but adds that the king was only present at the last one.[54] Długosz' history of these events may be read in part as an attempt to counter these rumors whose aim was to disparage the king's reputation. Throughout his work he consistently inflates Wladislas' role while downplaying that of Hunyadi.[55] This is even more true of Callimachus, whose *de rege Vladislao* goes further than Długosz and assigns Wladislas the primary role in *all* the battles of that year.[56]

The truth is, Wladislas *did* play a secondary role during much of the Long March, particularly early on. Hunyadi had borne the title of commander-in-chief (*capitaneus generalis exercitalis*), a decision that had been reached with the consent of all parties and based on Hunyadi's vast experience and recent successes. The voivode had borne responsibility for much of the mobilization, with Wladislas handing funds over to him to use as he saw fit. During the early stages of the campaign, when speed and surprise were of the utmost importance, Wladislas' position as leader of the more cumbersome and slower-moving tabor kept him out of much of the fighting. The king was well-suited to this role, being more familiar than the others with taborite tactics. The Hungarian cavalry did not feel comfortable with Hussite warfare. The Czech mercenaries, most of whom supported a Jagiellonian candidacy to the Bohemian throne, were quite happy to work with Wladislas. They could also easily communicate with the king and the other Poles in his retinue.[57] Most importantly, the tabor kept Wladislas guarded from the Ottoman cavalry, which purposely sought out and killed rulers and military leaders in battle in order to demoralize the enemy. The tabor played a vital role during the campaign, providing a secure encampment for the infantry and supply train. The

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[54] *Deutsche Reichtagsakten unter Kaiser Friedrich III.* (*1442–1445*), nr. 113, pp. 258–259. Interestingly, the author of the letter is also under the impression that the crusader army returned "unharmed," evidence of the success of the crusaders' own propaganda: "Ein ungarisches Heer habe dieses Jahr 3 'Vechten' mit den Türken getan; beim letzten 'Vechten' ist der König von Polen gewesen, 'und si haben al drei vechten obgelegen di Christen' und sind jetzt wieder zurück aus der Türkei gezogen ohne Schaden der von Polan sei jetzt zu Offen."

[55] For a more in-depth study of Długosz' historiography and these events see Nikodem, "Długosz."

[56] Callimachus' history was written for Wladislas' brother, Casimir, and meant to praise the Jagiellonian dynasty. Bonfini's history, which was written for Hunyadi's son and later King Matthew Corvinus, of courses focuses almost entirely on Hunyadi and his role.

[57] That the Poles and the Czechs could understand one another's language is related by Długosz (p. 182): "Polonis ac Bohemis unam esse linguam et unam utrinque genti originem, cum Theutonicis nihil utrique commune."

fact that the Ottomans did not fully engage it was not due to any cowardice on the part of the king, but rather to Turahan Bey's warnings.

Towards the end of the Long March Wladislas played a more direct role in the fighting, particularly at Kunovitsa, a sign of the king's increased experience and assertiveness. Though Hunyadi, Cesarini, Branković and others had no doubts about Wladislas' bravery and military prowess, their opinion was in the end secondary to that of his subjects in Hungary and peers within Christendom. He was aware of the rumors and statements being circulated by Piccolomini and others regarding his minimal contributions to the campaign.

In the coming months and in the next campaign, he would assume a much more prominent role as strategist and commander. This was not only due to a desire to compensate for the aforementioned rumors. It must be remembered that Wladislas was only a fifteen-year-old adolescent when he became ruler of Hungary,[58] a fact duly noted and remarked upon by contemporaries. At the time of the Battle of Varna in 1444 he was a young man of twenty, in a position to be taken more seriously and to function more independently as a ruler. This does not suggest he was immune to the influence of others—his advisors and in particular Cesarini continued to hold great sway over his opinions—only that his relationship to these men was no longer one of tutelage. He had come fully into his role as king.

Ibrahim Bey's Insurrection

To the same degree the Long March was a crusader "victory" it was an Ottoman "defeat." Despite Ottoman attempts to downplay the affair[59] it was evident that the Hungarians had bruised and bloodied the seemingly invincible Ottoman host. This had repercussions at the Ottoman court as various officials tried to single out who was to blame. We have already mentioned Turahan Bey's imprisonment, which was representative of a general disgust at court for provincial cavalry, marcher lords and akinji. Kasım Pasha, having suffered several defeats during the campaign, was removed as Beylerbey of Rumelia after only one year in office. The post

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58 Wladislas was born on 31 October ,1424.

59 In their fethname to the Mameluke sultan in 1445 they even claimed it as a victory (Bibliothèque Nationale, Manuscrits Arabes nr. 4434, ff. 133b-138b, titled مكتوب سلطان محمد خان بسلطان مصر), f. 135b.

was given once again to Şehabeddin. Fortune also smiled on Saruca Pasha, whom Fazlullah had isolated during his rise to power and had exiled to Gallipoli. Saruca had raised an army of 1,000 men at Gallipoli and joined the sultan's army at Plovdiv at a time when Murad was desperate for troops. The sultan looked with great favor on this display of initiative and loyalty, compounded by Saruca's admirable conduct during the fight at Zlatitsa pass.[60]

This display of sacrifice and loyalty contrasted with the actions of Fazlullah. Whereas Saruca had contributed his own men and resources to aiding the sultan, Fazlullah at the beginning of 1444 was still in possession of the large fortune he had amassed over years in office. Despite the means available to him the defterdar had failed to mobilize adequate troops in time. Moreover it was Fazlullah who had been the main architect of the empire's aggressive and expansionist policy begun nearly a decade earlier. This policy had provoked, in the eyes of the court, the very reaction Halil Pasha had warned against. The empire was on the brink of disaster, and Fazlullah became an easy scapegoat.[61] He was stripped of all of his offices, and Saruca took his place on the divan. Of all the vezirs it was Halil Pasha who emerged from the crisis not only intact, but more powerful than before, his only challenge now coming from Şehabeddin. He took it upon himself to deal with the various crises facing the empire, relying above all, as was his wont, on complex diplomacy.

One of the greatest crises facing the Ottoman Empire in 1444 was yet another uprising by Ibrahim Bey, Prince of Karaman. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Karamanid had suffered a humiliating defeat in 1443, when the crusade expedition planned for that summer failed to materialize. The terms of the peace treaty with Murad were more than charitable, given the extent of the Ottoman victory. It seems surprising, then, that Ibrahim Bey would flagrantly violate his oaths and dare to wage war once more against the sultan. The Gazavât tells us that it was the

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[60] Sadeddin, p. 211.

[61] Chalkokondyles, p. 340: "Murad deprived Fazlullah of his dignities and office, and put in his place Saruca, a man of Greek birth. Great power now was held by Halil Chandarli, than who there was no one more prudent in the sultan's Porte. Not long afterward Murad ordered Fazlullah imprisoned, and all of his wealth to be confiscated, which amounted to about fifty thousand gold pieces, and around forty thousand pounds of silver."

This is corroborated by Oruç Bey's chronicle, which shows Fazlullah as a vezir in 1443, but not in late 1444/45. During the same time Saruca Pasha reappears on the list of vezirs. Zaifi's gazavâtname indicates that Fazlullah was removed since he could not get along with Halil Pasha (Pehlivan, p. 603).

Byzantines who yet again incited the Karamanid to revolt:[62] "At length, [the emperor's] scheming mind concluded that he should once again stir up the Karamanid, and so he sent one of his chief monks[63] to him with letters. The monk departed and one day came before the Karamanid to present the letters." According to the Gazavât, the letter said that the Hungarians "had worn out the son of Osman" and that "if you need territory and act in time, you can seize his land while there is an opportunity... If you are afraid that you cannot withstand the son of Osman if he attacks you, have no fear, because the King of Hungary, the Despot (Branković)[64] and the Zupan Yanko (Hunyadi) will be marching from the west."[65]

It seems that the Ottomans intercepted one of these messengers or in some other way became privy to the diplomatic activity between the Karamanid and the Byzantines. The latter, of course, had begun military operations in Greece based on the mistaken notion that crusader armies would soon be appearing on the Gallipoli straits. The letters, which presented evidence of collusion between the two Ottoman rivals, prompted Halil Pasha,[66] himself a kadi (judge) and expert on Sharia Law, to send a petition to the chief justices of the heads of the four schools of Islamic

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[62] Gazavât, pp. 33–34 (Imber's translation, pp. 70–71).

[63] Imber's translation (p. 71) which is being used here translates the word keşiş as "priest." The word can mean either "priest" or "monk". I have chosen "monk" because we have seen previously how Constantine Dragas, John VIII and Mara Branković used monks to conduct diplomatic activity.

[64] The mention of Branković here is a further indication that the correspondence between Ibrahim Bey and the Byzantines took place during the Long March, in which Branković had participated. The narrative of the Gazavât shows an early awareness that Branković did not intend to fight alongside the crusaders in 1444, making it less likely that the "march from the west" refers to the invasion of autumn 1444. In 1444, the invasion took place from the north.

[65] Gazavât, pp. 33–34 (Imber's translation, pp. 70–71).

[66] The date of the documents are not given. They seem to have been written some time after the Battle of Zlatitsa as suggested by the phrase: (منعهم من التعرض الى دار الاسلام). Yet they seem to have been written before Ibrahim Bey actually began offensive operations, for neither in the sultan's letter nor the judgments themselves is there any mention that Ibrahim Bey had at that time committed an act of aggression on Ottoman lands, only that he had the intent (قصد) to do so. They were likely written in late January or early February 1444.

Halil Pasha may not himself have authored the letter but he was almost certainly behind it. As mentioned in the last chapter, he had been sent back to Edirne while the sultan and the army were on campaign, and it would have fallen on him to handle the situation. As a Kadi this step would seem all the more obvious.

Law in Cairo[67] seeking a condemnatory opinion against Ibrahim Bey. As the prologue of the petition states:

> The various sects of the infidels had entered into a pact against the son of Osman and intended to seize his land and take possession of it and to attack those Muslims residing within it and their homes and their property. So they (the infidels) gathered together a vast horde of troops to attack them. When the son of Osman heard about this he prepared a large army from the people of his country to attack them. He therefore left no one in his land or on its borders capable of waging war.[68] For at that point he wished to attack, as did his comrades along with him, in order to defend against the forsaken enemy. He headed out towards them and marched forward to meet them, and prevented them from daring to attack the Abode of Islam. And the Karamanid looked upon that and learned that the Son of Osman had departed to fight the infidel and the Karamanid desired to conquer some of the Son of Osman's country, knowing that he had taken his people out to fight the infidels. And the Karamanid took advantage of the Son of Osman's obligation to fight the infidels and prevent them from entering the Abode of Islam.[69]

The petition sent by Halil Pasha had several purposes. On its most basic level the petition was intended to classify Ibrahim Bey as an infidel, or *kafir*, and therefore strip him of his rights as a Muslim and relegate him to the same status as other rulers in the Dar Al-Harb. This would not only permit Murad to wage war on him, but actually declare a jihad against Ibrahim Bey. As a diplomatic move the petition was meant to deny Karaman's neighbors, specifically the Mamelukes and the Akkoyunlu, any pretext for assisting Ibrahim at a time when the Ottomans were threatened from multiple directions. The Akkoyunlu seem to have offered some sort of assistance to Karaman and Ilyas Bey Menteşeoğlu in 1443,[70] and to have done so again in 1444.[71] Of greater concern were the Mamelukes.

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[67] قاضي القضاء شيخ الاسلام شهاب الدين ابن حجر الشافي العسقلاني, قاضي القضاء شيخ الاسلام سعد الدين الدائري الحنفي, قاضي القضاء شيخ الاسلام بادر الدين التونسي الملكي, قاضي القضاء شيخ الاسلام بادر الدين البغدادي الحنبلي, الشيخ الاعلم عبد السلام البغدادي الحنفي

[68] See the last chapter for the extent and difficulties of the Ottoman mobilization in 1443.

[69] The petitions are described in Uzunçarşılı, "İbrahim Beyin." The actual Arabic text of the petition and judgments is appended to the above article as a series of lithographs of manuscripts. The cited text is from the Ottoman petition found in Lithograph Nr. 1.

[70] See chapter six.

[71] Mention of this is made in the Byzantine letter to Wladislas from July 1444: "Quas ob res vestro nomine et singulari auctoritate et felicitate moti sunt principes et populi

They had laid claim in the past to suzerainty over Karaman. During the Ottoman-Karamanid conflict in 1437[72] the Ottomans and Mamelukes had almost gone to war with one another on account of Ottoman aggression in southern Anatolia. Given the many enemies the Ottomans now faced, they could not hazard a conflict with the Mamelukes as well, who posing as the defenders of Ibrahim Bey might take advantage of their weak position and assert dominance in southwestern Anatolia. Whatever their thoughts regarding Ottoman-Karaman relations,[73] the sultan in Cairo and the Caliph were loathe to ignore the decisions of the four judges who were the most important living symbols of Cairo's religious authority.[74] By obtaining a condemnation[75] of Karaman the Ottomans virtually assured themselves of Mameluke neutrality.

The prologue of Halil Pasha's petition makes it clear that Ibrahim Bey was not acting alone, but had been contacted by an emissary of John VIII with the purpose of entering into an anti-Ottoman pact. This pact was intended to distract Murad, enable the success of the crusader mission, and allow Ibrahim Bey and the Byzantines to seize Ottoman territory.[76] The diplomatic correspondence between the two was likely begun late in

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Christianorum, eius [Amuratis] subditi, colligati, vicini et coadherentes; sed etiam eius fidei complices, Caramannus videlicet, qui magnam Asie orientalis partem suis viribus et exercitu usque ad maria adeptus est. Huic etiam additi sunt filii Karanlugk et plures alii." The word *Karanlugk filii* would seem to refer to the "sons of Karayülük," or the leaders of the Akkoyunlu. At this time their leader was Hamza Bey, though he had a number of estranged brothers to whom this passage may refer as well. The presence of the "sons of Karayülük" is also suggested by Zaifi's gazavâtname (Pehlivan, p. 602), which says that 1,000 men under the command of Karaoğlu (this seems to refer to the sons of Karayülük) and Yapaoğlu (possibly Ali Bey Yapaoğlu, who in 1465 became subashi of Akşehir) were put to route by Murad.

72 See chapter two.

73 It is unlikely the Mamelukes would have considered war with the Ottomans in 1444, given their own preparations for a major invasion of Rhodes in the summer of that year.

74 The caliphate and therefore the central authority of Sunni Islam was at that time in Cairo. The four judges of the four major schools of Islamic law were also in Cairo. Their decisions, particularly when unanimous, could be considered an authoritative pronouncement of Sunni law.

75 The judges' decision was not only that his cooperation was abhorrent, but that his blood was forfeit and other Muslims should wage war on him until he ceased to be traitor and was brought back into the fold.

76 Uzunçarşılı, "İbrahim Beyin," appended Lithograph nr. 1: "The Infidel Ruler of Constantinople corresponded with him and the two agreed that the Infidel [Ruler of Constantinople] would from one side and the Karamanid from the other would both remove the Ottoman from betwixt them and prevent him from fighting the infidels and the two of them would take possession of the land of Islam."

1443,[77] around the same time Dragas was dispatched to the Morea, i.e. in late October/early November. The Byzantines encouraged Ibrahim Bey to launch attacks in Anatolia while they campaigned in Rumelia. At the same time the crusader army would approach from the west. While Constantine Dragas was repairing the Hexamilion in late 1443 as a safeguard against Ottoman reprisal, Ibrahim Bey likewise took advantage of the absence of Ottoman troops to begin preparing his own forces. Both parties, however, decided to wait for further proof of the crusaders' success.

Despite the interception of the above-mentioned Byzantine-Karamanid correspondence, it seems that Ibrahim Bey was well aware of the rumors circulating in late January/early February that the crusaders had routed the sultan and were on their way to the straits. It seems highly likely that Ibrahim Bey was operating in concert with Constantine Dragas. The Despot of the Morea, as mentioned above, began his assault on Attica and Boeotia in February/March of 1444. Ibrahim Bey began his invasion of Ottoman lands around the same time. He plundered and assaulted a number of cities in neighboring Hamid-ili and in the north, to include Akşehir, Beyşehir, Karahısar, Bolvadın, Sivrihisar, Beypazar, Germiyan province and Ankara.[78]

For the time being Murad was powerless to react. He and Halil Pasha were aware of the construction of the crusader fleet in Venice[79] and the

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[77] There is no absolute way to determine the chronology of Ibrahim Bey's correspondence with the Byzantines, other than to say that it took place prior to and while he was planning his insurrection, as well as while Murad was still in the field and had not yet returned home. Hence the accusation in the petition that Ibrahim Bey had forced Murad to neglect his duties (تخذيل) to combat the infidel out of fear of his own lands (see quoted text in the above paragraph), and that he had engaged in this planning at a time when Murad was fighting the infidels:

بقصده لهذه المفسدة العظيمة من مقاتلة المسلمين حالة قتالهم للكفر

In terms of Ibrahim Bey's actual invasion of Ottoman territory, one can say that it took place sometime between Turahan Bey's imprisonment, i.e. after January 1444 (Turan, *Tarihi Takvimler*, p. 31), and before the Muslim year 848, i.e. before 20 April, 1444. My speculation as to when it took place is based on the logic of the events themselves, openly acknowledging that this is rather shaky ground, but necessary until stronger evidence as to the date of the correspondence may emerge.

[78] Turan, *Tarihi Takvimler*, pp. 31, 41.

[79] Wavrin, pp. 64–65 (Imber's translation, p. 123): "Meanwhile the Turk, through the Genoese, knew all about the fleet that was under construction in Venice and was very afraid."

plan to draw him into Asia so that the Christians could block the straits.[80] They did not wish to fall into this trap. Though Ömer Bey and his akinji were given license to attack the Morea, no greater assault was made to punish Constantine Dragas either. Iskender Bey's growing insurrection in Albania was an increasing threat as well. Before Murad could move to secure his own empire, which was moving closer each day to collapse, he would have to first make peace with his most powerful enemy—Hungary.

Proponents of Peace

Wladislas' increased authority and assertiveness became apparent when the Royal Diet convened in early April 1444.[81] Its first priority was the situation within Hungary. The king bypassed Frederick III and dealt directly with Giskra and Ladislas the Posthumous' Hungarian supporters. These chose to hold a preliminary assembly in Esztergom, to which the king sent his loyal retainers Lawrence Hedervary and Simon Rozgony.[82] These succeeded in convincing the opposition, under a guarantee of safe-conduct from the king, to attend the meeting in the capital. In early April a caravan of 600 horses headed from Esztergom to Buda. The most prominent member of the group was Giskra, with whom the truce of the previous year had recently ended, but who seemed ready now to establish a more permanent peace.[83] As the diet's decree later read: "The number of our prelates, barons, soldiers, and inhabitants was greater than has been seen in any other similar assembly."[84] Healthy attendance heightened the prospects for peace in Hungary and an end to the civil war. Although Giskra would not relinquish his recognition and "protection" of Ladislas, he nevertheless agreed, along with other rebel towns in the north, to suspend the civil war.[85] Yet Giskra was not the only aggressor. Pangracius, who had vexed Schlick himself on numerous occasions, continued to wage campaigns of plunder and banditry seemingly without royal approval. The Hungarian people, angry at his disruption of the peace and the ongoing banditry and upheaval in the kingdom, seized and drowned

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80 The Ottomans had been aware of the two-pronged crusader strategy since as early as 1439 (see chapter two).

81 The date Długosz gives of 23 April is late. See Dąbrowski, p. 136, who writes that it probably assembled on Easter, or 12 April. Długosz describes the diet at length (p. 295).

82 Dąbrowski, p. 137.

83 Ibid., p. 134.

84 Döry, *Decreta Regni*, p. 326.

85 Długosz, p. 295.

the majority of Pangracius' *familiares* in a river. Only a handful of these men, along with Pangracius himself, were saved by the intervention of Wladislas and the Poles. "This furor of the Hungarian people, which none of the noblemen tried to resist... decided on further aggression and concluded that they must capture and kill Giskra along with all of his men. With Giskra and all of his supporters dead the causes of the civil war would be put to rest."[86] Yet Wladislas was once again unwilling to violate his vow of safe-conduct despite the obvious benefit in this case to his interests. He sent Poles to smuggle Giskra out of the city and lead him north to Győr. Though Giskra remained thankful for the king's life-saving action and maintained the suspension of hostilities, the chance to achieve a lasting settlement had fled Buda as well.

The decree issued by the diet on 18 April 1444[87] is characterized first and foremost by a desire to normalize the situation in Hungary. The first step was to ensure Wladislas' position and authority. According to the first article all must recognize Wladislas as king and refuse to recognize any other King of Hungary "as long as I am living, and to assist us and remain loyal to us in any event." All barons and prelates and magnates were obliged to affix their personal seal to letters containing this statement of loyalty. From there, another set of articles dealt with restoring royal prerogatives in terms of the appointment of offices. Still another set of articles treated financial issues, insisting among others that only the king had the right to mint coinage. The majority of the decrees dealt with undoing the injustices committed by both sides during the civil war, particularly questions of land ownership. We remarked in an earlier chapter how Wladislas' profligacy in doling out the royal demesne had led to the alienation of a good deal of government revenue in both Hungary and Poland. This had been a necessary expedient at a time when the king had no other reliable income and his weakened position did not allow him to tax the nobility or seek other sources of revenue. With Wladislas' position as king secure it was time to undo the damage wrought by this policy, and by the many years of civil war.

What is conspicuous about the diet's decree is the absence of any mention of a second expedition.[88] This question was one of the most

[86] Ibid., pp. 295–296.

[87] Döry, *Decreta Regni*, pp. 324–337

[88] The articles of the decree dealing with financial issues are perhaps, as Długosz suggests (p. 296), a reflection of the necessity to raise funds for the campaign.

pressing issues at the assembly.[89] The matter involved numerous states and various parties, among them the Hungarians, the Turks, the Serbs, the Poles, the Venetians, the Ragusans, the Burgundians, the Papal Curia, the Byzantines, the Karamanids, etc. All of these had fortunes at stake pending the crown's decision. Domestically there were a large number of Hungarians, perhaps the majority, who preferred a favorable peace treaty to war. These were not only the erstwhile supporters of Wladislas. Years of turmoil since the death of Sigismund had rent the fabric of the kingdom. Many argued that it was time to rebuild and strengthen Hungary, and not embark on another foreign adventure. Who stood to benefit from a Balkan offensive, outside of Wladislas and his immediate supporters? The conditions of peace Murad was offering were quite generous, and would become even more so after further negotiations. He was prepared to restore to Hungary practically all that had been lost since the Battle of Nicopolis. This would not only revive Hungarian hegemony, it would end the most immediate problem of Turkish raids into southern and eastern Hungary, giving some respite to areas of the kingdom that had been troubled for years. It was for these reasons that the Royal Diet, the voice of the kingdom, refused to legislate any real support for the expedition. The king could still decide on war or peace, as was his royal prerogative, but his subjects were by and large unwilling to sacrifice for an undertaking that seemed superfluous and mostly in the interests of a select few.

We saw earlier how Branković had begun negotiations with Mahmud Chelebi, and how an Ottoman representative was sent to Wladislas while still present in Serbia. At that time Branković had pleaded with the king to delay his return until negotiations with the Turks were settled. When Wladislas decided to return home Branković made the decision to accompany him, remaining at his side at least until the end of the April diet.[90] Accompanying Branković was a Byzantine monk who had been sent by the despot's daughter (and Murad II's wife) Mara.[91] He was there to work

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[89] See Długosz, pp. 295–296.

[90] Ibid. Branković's name appears among the signatories on a document issued by Wladislas on 22 February, as well as several Venetian documents which suggest his presence in February and March. Branković's name clearly appears on the decree listing the attendees at the diet (Döry, *Decreta Regni*, p. 334). Długosz (p. 295) also explicitly states that Branković attended, "because he saw that it concerned him."

[91] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 2, p. 401. This emissary was one of the "several emissaries" pluribus itaque nunciis Długosz makes mention of between the sultan and Branković for the liberation of Mahmud Pasha, another being the emissary that reached the crusaders while still in Serbia. As Długosz writes (p. 299): "Pluribus itaque nunciis,

with Branković and facilitate negotiations with the Hungarians.[92] Murad II was aware that if he offered to return the despot's lands and his sons, Branković would agree to serve Ottoman interests and become eager for peace and the return of prisoners. This is precisely what happened. Branković, who had been the most ardent advocate for war in 1443 now became the most fervent promoter of peace. First, however, the despot had to win over the king, who ultimately decided such questions.[93]

Another group strongly advocating for peace were the Poles. They had sent a delegation to Buda prior to the start of the diet in order to urge the king's return and discuss important issues.[94] Wladislas had promised to return to Poland by Easter and tend to urgent matters in the kingdom.[95] When the time came, according to Długosz, the king was dissuaded from leaving by the pleas of the Hungarians, who wanted him to remain and ensure the peace and/or to prepare for war against the Ottomans. The Poles openly expressed their frustration. The reasons which had driven them to abstain from the previous expedition were still present, and even stronger than before. The conflict between the Dukes of Mazovia and Lithuania required the arbitration of the king, as did the continuing border conflict in Silesia. In the past year Poland had suffered from Tartar raids and even a devastating earthquake.

On top of all of this, Oleśnicki and the Polish conciliarists realized that a successful anti-Turkish expedition bolstered the position of the papists and threatened the conciliarists.[96] In February, not long after the campaign's conclusion, Eugene IV called for the Poles to immediately cease their support of the council. He had the full backing of Wladislas. The king, under the influence of Cesarini, ordered not only that funds be collected for the Balkan expedition but that they receive payment on the

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qui pro liberacione woiewode Nathulie in superiori bello capti, in presencia sua consistente, ad illum imperatoris Turcorum nomine accedebant."

92 Spremić, "Despota Serbski Jerzy Branković i bitwa pod Warną 1444 roku," in *Balcanica Posnaniensa* VIII (1997), p. 43. The source he cites for this is the *Chronica Ragusina Junii Restii*, p. 289.

93 There is evidence that Branković, in order to win adherents to the peace process, offered his extensive possessions in Hungary to Hunyadi, who in exchange agreed to assist the despot in his endeavors. See Engel, "Janos Hunyadi," in *From Hunyadi to Rakoczi*, pp. 112–113. The author demonstrates that Hunyadi had come into possession of Branković's former lands sometime before the spring of 1445. This supports Długosz' accusation that Hunyadi had entered into a pact with Branković, whereby he would help the despot regain Serbia in exchange for his lands in Hungary.

94 Dąbrowski, p. 141.

95 Długosz , pp. 296–298, discusses the Polish attitude at length.

96 See Dąbrowski, pp. 141–142.

funds recently sent to Basel under orders from Oleśnicki. He even threatened Oleśnicki's recently-acquired status as cardinal, which he maintained was contingent on his royal approval. The king and Cesarini did not overlook the University of Krakow, which had been a steadfast pillar of the conciliar movement. Ironically Oleśnicki, who had been the main architect of Wladislas' kingship in Hungary, now found himself advocating for Wladislas' return home and the abandonment of the anti-Ottoman crusade. He was joined in this by the original opponents of the project. Thus the delegation which arrived at Buda in February 1444 to demand Wladislas' return could be said to truly represent the entire kingdom, and even its affiliates in Mazovia and Lithuania.

Advocates of War

First and foremost among those advocating *for* the expedition were Eugene IV and his legate Cardinal Cesarini. Eugene's struggle with Basel was ongoing, yet the threat posed by the council had diminished considerably in the last two years. In November 1442 the antipope Felix V left Basel and moved to Lausanne.[97] Six months later, on 16 May 1443, the council held its last official session, decreeing that three years hence a new council would convene in Lyons. This did not mean that the conciliar movement had come to an end. The conciliarist Fathers lingered on at Basel in the hopes that a political breakthrough or other development might tilt the scales once more in their favor. The four Ecclesiastical Electors of Germany, the prelates of Poland, the King of Aragon, and a number of other influential leaders and churchmen still adhered to their party. The struggle would continue on even after Eugene's death. But by 1444 the papacy clearly had the upper hand.

Of equal concern to Eugene IV was the union with the Eastern Church. John VIII had attempted to stifle the main voice of the opposition, Mark Eugenicus of Ephesus, by imprisoning him. This only served to rally the opposition, and Eugenicus, released in 1442 or 1443, was tireless in his efforts to tear the union apart. He had been the only Greek prelate at Florence not to sign the final proclamation, a fact which heightened his esteem among the anti-conciliarists along with his irreproachable sanctity. Mark was also a talented demagogue, and able to speak to the Byzantine people in a language imbued with anti-Latin stereotypes that

[97] Gill, *The Council*, p. 338.

they could easily understand. Supporters of the union, who were generally more learned and theologically refined in the arguments, seemed befuddled as to how to counter Mark's influence. A further blow was dealt the unionist cause when Patriarch Metrophanes II died on 1 August 1443, for whom no fitting successor could be found.

The union's inability to take hold in Byzantium did not prevent John VIII from continuing to solicit the pope and other western powers for the aid he had been promised in 1439. This is clear from the many embassies to the West in 1443 and 1444. More importantly, Constantine Dragas' actions in the early winter of 1444 had dissolved any peace agreement still remaining between the Byzantines and the Ottomans after the siege of 1442. The only thing keeping Murad from conducting an invasion of Dragas' lands or besieging Constantinople itself were the myriad other threats facing the Ottomans in the spring and summer of 1444, and most importantly the state of war with Hungary. Recognizing this the Byzantines worked diligently to keep the Ottomans off balance until the crusaders could deliver the *coup de grace*. The question, of course, was when this would come. In order to better coordinate operations with the Hungarians and inform them of the situation in the Peloponnesus and Anatolia both Constantine and John VIII dispatched emissaries in early April 1444 to travel via Ragusa to Wladislas' court.[98] These emissaries no

[98] Krekić, Dubrovnik, p. 337, nr. 1041,1042. Jorga, Notes et extraits, vol. II, p. 402 (footnote). Constantine's emissary was a monk named "George." He requested two galleys from the Ragusans, though it is not clear whether these were for Constantine Dragas and his men or John VIII. The emissaries of John VIII seem to have gone to Venice first, to observe the progress of the fleet, and then to Hungary, where they were present in May and June. This is evident both from the above entry (Krekić, "Dubrovnik," p. 337) and from a Venetian letter to Reguardatis on 4 July (*Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 51, p. 112.) Reguardatis had written the senate earlier to inform them that the Byzantine emissary had spoken in Buda about the preparations. The Byzantine emissary had mentioned the papacy and Burgundy's contributions to the fleet, but failed to mention the Venetians: "Scribis insuper, oratorem constantinopolitanum dixisse de galeis que armate sunt per Summum Pontificem et Illustrissimum dominum ducem Burgondie, et de illis, quas dominus suus Imperator habet nulla de nostro dominio facta mentione." This irked the Venetians and they instructed Reguardatis to correct this impression. In April and early May, however, there would have been little evidence that the Serenissima was contributing much to the fleet, which explains the Byzantine emissary's omission. The Byzantine letter written 30 June (Długosz, p. 302) also mentions this emissary, who must have arrived back in Constantinople sometime prior to this date: "Per reditum legati nostri ab excellencia vestra recepimus literas maiestatis vestre, in quarum serie et nostri oratoris vervis cerciores redditi sumus vos optime et feliciter valere." These letters probably contained news of the diet and Wladislas' oath there, since the Byzantines say they were much heartened by the letters' contents.

doubt made mention of Constantine's recent actions in Greece (which is probably why Constantine requested two military vessels from Ragusa) as well as Ibrahim Bey's insurrection. The men would have arrived in Buda while the diet was in session or shortly thereafter, and may have even witnessed the king's oath to Cesarini on April 24th. In any case, they would have left with the impression that an expedition would occur in the next few months. This impression may have been somewhat clouded if the emissaries did in fact later travel to Venice[99] and observe the lack of progress on the fleet's armament.

Aside from the Byzantines and the Roman Curia, the other proponents of an expedition were the Burgundians, the Venetians, the Ragusans, a portion of the Hungarian nobility and Wladislas himself. It fell upon Cardinal Cesarini, with the assistance of Francis Condulmer, to try and coordinate these various efforts, despite the fact that the cardinal had no political authority and very limited leverage. In other words he had no means of compelling the various parties to fulfill their responsibilities. He could only rely on his powers of communication and persuasion, which, prodigious as they were, were no substitute for actual authority. Yet he did his best to try and convince the various actors to work with one another for the common interest. This required constant assurance that the individual interests would likewise be served, a task which depended on constant communication. Though Cesarini, along with Cardinal Condulmer, tried his best to facilitate this communication, the fact is that the various parties were under multiple authorities, and were conducting operations hundreds of miles apart from one another. This rendered effective communication and coordination virtually impossible. In addition, each situation had its own complex set of variables that determined its progress and development quite independent of the cardinals' will or the activities of the others. Understanding this dynamic is the key to making sense of the peace negotiations of 1444, the progress of the land campaign, and the failure of fleet operations in the straits.

The Venetians were prepared to sacrifice their treaty with the Ottomans and invest a good deal of men and money into the crusader fleet. They therefore wanted every assurance that the land expedition would occur. As far as the Hungarians were concerned, the fleet's failure to assemble and block the straits the previous year had cost them victory and had led to the debilitating, nightmarish retreat, still fresh in memory.

[99] See previous note.

Deserved or not responsibility for that betrayal fell squarely on the shoulders of Pope Eugene IV. It was the pope who had issued the Bull urging the crusaders to undertake the expedition, but then failed to come through on his promises. Ibrahim Bey and the Byzantines, impressed that the promised land expedition in 1443 had occurred and was largely successful, were nonetheless frustrated that operations had not taken place in accordance with the promised timetable. The lack of effective coordination had put both Karaman and Byzantium in very undesirable situations. The Hungarians were not willing to march against the Turks unless certain the fleet would prevent the Army of Anatolia from crossing into Europe. The Venetians would only dispatch the fleet if they could be certain the Hungarians would march against the Turks. Ibrahim Bey was willing to go along with the Byzantine plan if they could assure him that the other parties could keep the Army of Rumelia in Europe. The situation was not unlike a group of boys crowded around a pool of cold water, each insisting that he would jump in and join the game only after the others had leapt in first. It was the cardinal's job to move from one boy to the other and convince him that the others had already made the leap, knowing quite well in some cases that they hadn't.

First and foremost Cesarini had to convince Wladislas of the benefit and necessity of another expedition. He also had to convince the king that an expedition in 1444 would have greater chances of success. The king, and the other Hungarians, were concerned that Hungary would be left to shoulder the burden alone. In response to this anxiety Cesarini could point to earnest indications that a fleet would disembark. To those involved it seemed a foregone conclusion that once the ships were in place they would have no problem preventing the Ottoman Army from crossing into Europe. The question was whether they would actually get underway and arrive in the straits. Should the fleet perform its mission the land army's task would be quite easy. Had the crusaders not come close to succeeding in 1443 despite the fleet's absence? With a large percentage of the Ottoman army stranded in Anatolia the crusaders felt they could sweep through Rumelia and reach the Ottoman capital in Edirne with only minimal resistance. Cesarini could point to the significant military action already undertaken by the Byzantines in early 1444, as well as the revolt of Iskender Beg in Albania and that of Ibrahim Bey in Karaman, news which would have been confirmed by the recently-arrived Byzantine emissaries. The cardinal tried as hard as he might to convince the king and the nobles that another such opportunity would not present itself.

The other actors had already leapt, in expectation of the Hungarians. Should the king abandon them, they would not make that leap again.

Wladislas himself knew he stood to gain much from a successful expedition. For one, he would eliminate the Turkish threat and give Hungary the guaranteed respite from Turkish incursions that not even a peace treaty could offer. As the liberator of all Greece and destroyer of the Turks Wladislas could achieve greater fame than any Christian ruler since Baldwin or Charlemagne. The remaining resistance to his reign would melt away. Members of the king's *familia*, such as the Rozgonys, Thallocis and Hedervaris, stood to gain not only the gratitude of the king and the kingdom and the bestowal of more offices and benefices, but a good deal in wealth and plunder and a chance to achieve fame and power in the same manner as Hunyadi. It is not certain if Cesarini put forth some or all of these arguments, though it is doubtful that he spared any means to convince the king of the necessity for war. In doing so he was not being guileful or disingenuous. Sincerity is one of the most persuasive aids in argument, and Cesarini was passionate in his conviction that a crusade in 1444 would succeed and that the unity of Christendom would be achieved through the expulsion of Islam.

On 24 April Wladislas[100] laid his hands in those of Cesarini and swore an oath to undertake an expedition against the Turks that year.[101] Cesarini promptly informed the other parties involved, citing this as a clear indication of the king's intention and reassuring them in their own efforts. But how clear a declaration was this? The Hungarians must have known from Condulmer's own accounts that the armament of the papal ships, as of early April, was hardly under way (see below). The same day that Wla-

[100] This date is more approximate than certain; the 24th was the day in which the diet likely concluded. In the preamble to the infamous Act of Szeged (Długosz, pp. 306–307) Wladislas makes reference to a previous oath made at the diet. The oath of Szeged is presented simply as a reaffirmation of this previous decision: "decernimus, firmamus et stabilimus unanimi consensu et voluntate tocius predicte convencionis ire et nobiscum ducere ista estate seu anno potentem exercitum versus partes Grecie et Romanie, et cum Dei adiutorio totis viribus nostris laborare ad exterminium dictorum impiorum Turcorum. Idque pro maiori rei firmitate iuravimus in manibus reverendissimi in Christo patris domini Iuliani cardinalis sancti Angeli, Apostolice Sedis legati..." Reference to the April oath is also made in a Venetian letter to Cesarini from 12 May, referring to letters from Cesarini written in late April (*Fontes Rerum Polonicarum*, nr. 44, p. 94). There is a slight difference in the time given for the campaign, namely *ista estate* in the Venetian letter and *ista estate seu anno* in the king's text. Wladislas may have been relying on the ambiguity of the word *estas* which usually means "summer" but can also mean "year." *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 43, also makes reference to the decision to go to war.

[101] Or that "summer"; see above note.

dislas swore his oath to the cardinal he decided to dispatch an emissary to the Ottomans, "a man faithful to us in deed and enterprise, fully instructed and adequately informed to negotiate on our behalf with all our authority and the fullness of our power, so that he may be able to negotiate, draw up and conclude [an agreement]."[102] There were a number of reasons for

[102] The emissary's name was Stojko Gisdanić and his letters of instruction bore the date of 24 April (Bodnar, letter 9B, pp. 39–40.) Halecki used Gisdanić's rather low rank as an argument that he was not an actual emissary of the king. As Dąbrowski later pointed out, however, it was not uncommon for men of such rank to be used as emissaries by the Hungarian king. Gisdanić may have had some linguistic qualifications or other knowledge/familiarity with the Turkish court and customs that made him well-suited to the job. In any case, the King's own letters of patent state that Gisdanic had served as an emissary on a number of occasions.

The peace of Szeged is a topic written on extensively by some of the more renowned historians of the 19th and 20th centuries from various nations and in a number of languages. The focus of the debate has been over the process of the negotiations, whether or not the treaty was signed, and under what circumstances. The historiography of the treaty of Szeged could provide enough material for its own full-length work. Yet the argumentation has been neither circular nor fruitless. Real progress has been made, particularly through the discovery of new and relevant sources. Among these are Cyriac of Ancona's letters and the anonymous Gazavât. For the most part I follow Pal Engel's arguments on the subject (Pal Engel, "Janos Hunyadi and the 'peace of Szeged,'" *Acta orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47, part 3 (1994): 241–257.). Engel's chronology of events and other interpretations, including Hunyadi's role and the fact that the peace treaty was ratified at Oradea on 15 August, seem to be a skillful and accurate interpretation of the extant source material. An essential area in which my interpretation differs from that of Engel's is in the role of the king. Engel suggests that Hunyadi and Branković engineered the negotiations without the knowledge of the king. It seems that Engel is not familiar with Dąbrowski's monograph on the topic titled *L'Année 1444* (Krakow: Académie Polonaise des Sciences et des Lettres, 1952), but only with Halecki. Dąbrowski maintains that the king was fully aware of the negotiations, and saw them as a positive measure for two reasons: 1) If the crusader fleet failed to materialize or perform its mission the Hungarians could accept the treaty, abandon the crusade honorably and still have made considerable gains; 2) it kept the sultan off guard, and encouraged him to cross the straits and combat Ibrahim Bey. The main source for those maintaining the king's ignorance regarding the negotiations is Długosz (p. 299). He writes that Hunyadi and Branković undertook the initial negotiations with the sultan and that they accepted the terms in Edirne "*Wladislao inconsulto*". Yet one must be careful here when dealing with Długosz as a source. His use of the phrase "*Wladislao inconsulto*" as well as his mention of the deal between Branković and Hunyadi would seem to be pulled from his main source for the Varna campaign, the letter of Andreas de Pallatio (*Codex epistolaris seculi decimi quinti*, p. 461). Pallatio is even more tendentious than Długosz in terms of his wish to praise Wladislas' actions and downplay any of the king's wrongdoing. This is perhaps one of the reasons Długosz so eagerly draws upon this source, for he shares Pallatio's historiographical agenda in terms of villainizing Hunyadi and exhonerating the king. Długosz's bias was in part due to contemporary attitudes towards Hunyadi's successor, Matthew Corvinus. For more on Długosz' historiography and his treatment of Hunyadi and Wladislas see the excellent study by J. Krochmal, "Władyław Warneńczyk w

this decision. Conducting peace negotiations and war preparations simultaneously was not at all unusual. If one wants to achieve a favorable peace agreement, one does not cease to prepare for war. The king and the diet also worked to hedge their bets. Wladislas could not be certain that the fleet would get underway, or that the necessary funds would be raised, or that Frederick III would agree to a truce, etc. For these reasons the king decided to embrace a double policy, on the one hand working towards peace, and on the other planning for war.[103]

Yet there were other factors and personalities involved, first and foremost Hunyadi. Pal Engel, Joseph Held and others have recently taken a more skeptical look at Hunyadi's own motivations during this period than the one taken by traditional Hungarian historiography. Rather than see Hunyadi simply as a Hungarian patriot and national hero, they regard him as a nobleman motivated primarily by a relentless ambition to become the most important figure in the kingdom—an ambition he later realized. Hunyadi's opportunism was initially proposed by Długosz himself and later echoed most famously by the twentieth century historian Oskar Halecki. According to these persons, the voivode struck a deal with Branković whereby in exchange for the latter's extensive lands in Hungary

świetle roczników Jana Długosza," *Balcanica Posnaniensa* VIII (1997): 129–143. I will develop my arguments regarding this matter throughout the following pages, but it is worth once again emphasizing that like Dąbrowski I believe the king was fully aware of the peace negotiations, and that the subterfuge surrounding these events was not in order to deceive the king, but to deceive others such as the Venetian representative Reguardatis and the Byzantine emissaries who would likely have abandoned their preparations for war had they learned of the extent of the negotiations for peace.

[103] With the vast literature surrounding the events in July, it is often overlooked that this double game began back in April. In both cases, it is the secrecy surrounding the kingdom's policy that made it difficult even for fifteenth-century historians to make sense of it. The king, Hunyadi, Cesarini and the others involved would try to conceal certain aspects of their resolutions for war from Branković and Murad, while at the same time concealing as much as possible their plans for peace from those parties with a vested interest in the crusade. It is curious, for example, that Wladislas' oath to Cesarini is mentioned only in letters to Venice and in a document concerning another, similiarly clandestine oath, the Act of Szeged. Surely, had this oath been made in full public, before the emissaries of the sultan (the monk sent by Mara), Branković and others it would have found its way into Ottoman sources, which were quite happy to report on Wladislas as a perjuror. It is not unreasonable to assume that this two-faced policy was decided on at the diet in Buda itself. As we have mentioned, there was no official resolution at the diet in terms of the war; nor was there an official resolution for peace. The obvious compromise would have been to prepare for both, and let later events determine which course to take.

Hunyadi agreed to ensure that a peace treaty would be signed.[104] At the same time that Cesarini was trying to convince the king to go to war, Hunyadi was trying to convince Wladislas of the advantages of peace, motivated in no small part by a private agreement with Branković.

We have mentioned the earlier diplomatic activity between the Porte and the Hungarian court, particularly the arrival and presence in Buda of the Greek monk sent by Mara to George Branković. His mission seems to have been both the redemption of the prisoners seized during the campaign and negotiating for an eventual peace settlement. Murad's Grand Vizier, Halil Pasha, and his sister, Mahmud Chelebi's wife, had been pressuring the sultan to obtain the release of the captives and most importantly Mahmud Chelebi.[105] The Hungarians agreed to release the sultan's brother-in-law and the other prisoners in exchange for the generous sum of 70,000 gold florints.[106] After their return, the sultan and the divan questioned these men, particularly Mahmud Chelebi, who told the sultan "everything he had seen and heard." Mahmud had been present with the king and his army since the Battle of Kunovitsa. Though it is impossible to determine how much he knew, he was at least aware that there were strong proponents of both peace and war within the kingdom, and that the Hungarians were preparing for both eventualities.

The envoy sent by Mara must have laid the groundwork for future negotiations, and in early June a Hungarian delegation had arrived in

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[104] To understand the details of this agreement, see Engel, "Janos Hunyadi." This same proposal was made and developed by Halecki in his work on the negotiations (*The Crusade of Varna: A Discussion of Controversial Problems* (New York: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, 1943). As can be seen in my notes below, I concur with Engel that Hunyadi had been co-opted by Branković to work on behalf of a peace agreement. I do not believe, however, that Hunyadi did this clandestinely, but rather openly. In other words, he became a strong, and no doubt the most significant advocate for the peace party at court, succeeding for quite some time in counter-balancing the influence of Cesarini who was the strongest advocate for war. The king, and indeed the Hungarian nation, were content to let developments themselves ultimately guide their decision.

[105] See Neşri, p. 67.

[106] Oruç Bey, p. 65, states that in the context of the peace agreements the sultan gave "a large amount of florints" for the prisoners, in particular Mahmud Bey. The Gazavât makes it clear that Mahmud was released prior to the negotiations in Edirne, which means he must have returned around mid-May. Długosz (p. 300) is even more specific: "The voivode of Anatolia (Mahmud Celebi) was no small help to both parties seeking peace. Before the peace agreement was made he was redeemed by the Turks for 70,000 florints." The fact that Mahmud Chelebi left Buda at this time makes it nearly certain that he traveled back with Mara's emissary.

Edirne to negotiate the peace terms.[107] In the delegation were representatives of Wladislas, Hunyadi and Branković.[108] They were accompanied by sixty knights. The delegates had to conform to the intricate ceremonies of the Porte, first approaching the Grand Vezir Halil and the other pashas on the divan.[109] Relatively quickly, after only two days, they were granted an audience—"first the king's emissary, then the despot's, and last, the one from John [Hunyadi], foremost in martial courage—and [they] presented letters of credence written in Latin, Greek and Serbian, and each presented his modest gift to the prince."[110] The next day they dealt with Halil Pasha and the other vezirs on the details of the negotiations. They more or less demanded the return of all the lands in their provinces that Murad had conquered since the beginning of his reign. The Pashas were willing

[107] It is thanks to Cyriac of Ancona that we know quite a bit about these negotiations (Bodnar, nr. 9). Since these letters were first analyzed by F. Pall in 1937 historians have been able to establish the dates of the negotiations and the arrival and departure of the delegations with convincing accuracy. In terms of secondary sources I rely here first and foremost on Engel's article "Janos Hunyadi," as well as İnalcik's *Fatih Devri*, pp. 38–52.

[108] Halecki, who argued that Stojko Gisdanic was not in truth representing the king, pointed to the presence of representatives from Hunyadi (a certain Vitislaus) and of Branković (Atanasije Frashak, Metropolitan of Smederevo and his Chancellor, Bogdan) as evidence that these latter two were driving the negotiations. In fact, the Ottomans themselves may have insisted upon their appearance. As we shall see, the sultan later insisted that all three—Branković, Wladislas and Hunyadi—personally ratify the peace treaty. Throughout the Gazavât, and indeed in most Turkish sources, Hunyadi plays as prominent if not more prominent a role than King Wladislas himself. It must have seemed to the Ottomans that the voivode of Transylvania, who had waged war against the Ottomans in 1441 and 1442 with his own men and by his own means was quite capable of independent action and authority. In order to absolutely ensure their security, they wanted representatives from all the major actors present at the negotiations, including Hunyadi. The presence of an emissary from Branković, who was most affected by the peace process, needs no explanation.

[109] See chapter two for more details on Ottoman diplomatic protocol. The Gazavât (Imber's translation, p. 68) also mentions this embassy and the account is very similar to Cyriac's, even in such small details as the number of days the emissaries had to wait.

[110] Once again, it is important to point out the difficulty in some scholars' assertion that the king had no knowledge of these negotiations. The Ottomans had sent dignitaries to Wladislas before and were familiar with the court, with the king's seal, and with his practices. Could they have been duped so easily by an impostor? The sultan would simply not have negotiated with Gisdanić had he had the slightest indication that he did not truly represent the king. Would Hunyadi have actually risked conducting highest-level negotiations with the most powerful force in the Balkans without the knowledge of his sovereign king? Had the sixty knights present in the delegation been able to hide their destination from the king as well? And where was Wladislas' wrath when he eventually did find out that these negotiations had taken place behind his back, as he must have when the Ottoman emissary appeared before him later that summer? Again, just as Dąbrowski indicated in *L'Année 1444*, the king must have had full knowledge of the proceedings, as did Cesarini.

to grant this—save Golubac. The Christian representatives were not in a mood to haggle. With war preparations in Hungary proceeding apace, and with the Ottomans facing several crises, they knew their bargaining position was strong. They likely informed Halil of the powerful war party within Hungary, and that if the terms of the peace were not generous enough the sultan would almost certainly face an invasion that summer. The truth of this argument would have rendered it all the more convincing. The Christian emissaries stood their ground on Golubac. Left with little choice, the Porte conceded, and the emissaries returned to Hungary with the terms of a peace treaty in hand.

The terms and conditions of the treaty can be compiled from several sources.[111] First and foremost Branković's lands were to be restored and his blinded sons were to be returned. Second, Vlad Dracul would remain a vassal of Murad, but would no longer be forced to appear in person at the sultan's court, though he was required to send a hostage in his stead. Vlad Dracul and Murad were bound by a reciprocal agreement to return any deserters or runaways: "If our people should take refuge in his territories, they must send them back to us, and we must do the same if any persons flee here from those lands."[112] Although Vlad was the sultan's tributary, he and the Wallachians were still considered as subject to the Hungarians.[113] A later letter from the Polish nobility urging Wladislas to

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[111] Dariusz Kołodziejczyk relatively recently compiled a list of terms using three western sources which make mention of them. (Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, "Traktatat Segedyński Odnaleziony?" in *Balcanica Posnaniensa* VIII (1997): 119–128.) The three sources are 1) Cyriac's letter (Bodnar, nr. 9) which includes the sultan's own letter to Murad, 2) a letter from the Polish nobility in which they discuss the terms of the treaty (*Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 1, part 1, pp. 140–144) and 3) remarks made by the chronicler Długosz (p. 291). It is curious that Kołodziejczyk, who makes reference to the Gazavât and had access to it, did not look at other Turkish sources. He also makes the claim that Turkish historians, not well-versed in western sources, were not in a position to apply the information in the Gazavât to the greater problem of the treaty. İnalcik (*Fatih Devri*, 38–52), however, did just that, and his own discussion of the treaty was perhaps the most advanced up until Pal's article, which of course built on İnalcik's own arguments and discoveries.

[112] As Kołodziejczyk mentions, this clause was included in almost all Ottoman treaties of the time. Yet he fails to explain its significance. The clause was meant to prevent foreign powers from hosting rival claimants to the throne, a practice the Byzantines were particularly fond of and which they used sometimes with great success. This clause was particularly important in regards to Wallachia, since many of these "pretenders" sought support in the Dobrudja, adjacent to Wallachia. Indeed, in 1444 the pretender Orhan, and in 1445 the pretender Savji would both head to the region in the hopes of finding adherents and supporters of their claim to the throne. The clause was intended to ensure they would be handed over promptly to the sultan.

[113] Chalkokondyles, p. 317.

accept the treaty mentions the following terms: a part of Albania was to be ceded to Branković, the sultan would pay the Hungarians 100,000 florints, and Murad would supply 25,000 troops to Wladislas when needed to fight his enemies.[114] In terms of the fortresses to be handed over to the Christians, they were Golubac, Smederevo, Zarnovo, Kruševac, Kovin, Severin,[115] Novo Brdo, Srebrenica, Ostrovica, Surin, Koznik, Koprijan, Zyelonigrod, Prokuplje and Leskovac (the latter two fortresses were retained by the sultan in 1444).[116] In exchange for all of this, the Ottomans simply asked for a ten-year truce.

At first glance these terms would seem incredibly advantageous to the Hungarians. The truth is the restored areas were given primarily to Branković,[117] not Wladislas and the Hungarians. The sultan, as future events will make clear, had already succeeded in ensuring Branković's neutrality. The Ottomans were not so naive to believe that the Hungarians would without question abide by the treaty. At the same time they desperately needed peace. The decision to give up territory to benefit a neutral party—Branković—and not the Hungarians, was a crafty means of obtaining peace through seemingly generous terms without empowering the enemy.[118]

While the king's plenipotentiaries were negotiating in Edirne, Cesarini was busy promoting the crusade in Hungary. Two prerequisites were necessary before an anti-Ottoman campaign could be considered: a guarantee of non-aggression from Frederick III's party—and money. The first was handled rather quickly in comparison with the drawn-out negotia-

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[114] In their letter (*Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 1, part 1, pp. 140–144), it is not particularly clear when and to what extent they received information regarding the treaty, which is why I include these terms separately. Yet Długosz does mention the handover of at least a part of Albania to Branković, and the agreement to supply troops in time of war was not uncommon in Ottoman peace treaties, which give these terms some measure of authenticity. It would seem, however, that the number of troops (25,000) and the amount of money (100,000 florins) is exaggerated. 25,000 troops would have been about nearly a third of the Ottoman army. The 100,000 florins may refer to the money paid for Mahmud Pasha's redemption, which in truth amounted to 70,000 florins.

[115] Dąbrowski (p. 152) writes that the castle of Severin refers to Severin on the river Lim in Serbia, not to Turnu Severin which was at that time controlled by the Hungarians.

[116] See Długosz, p. 300, as well as the editor's notes on p. 421.

[117] See Dąbrowski, p. 153, for a description of where these castles were located.

[118] Dąbrowski, *L'Année 1444*, p. 26, argues that Cyriac was in fact a papal agent. It seems that Cyriac was indeed in the pay of Eugene IV, but he was also clearly working in the interests of the Byzantines. His relationship to the two parties seems to have been very similar to that of John Torcello.

tions of 1443. There were several reasons for this. One was the relative success of the previous year and the excitement it had generated throughout Christendom. To hinder this year's expedition would affect not only the plans of Hungary, but also of the Papacy, Ragusa, Venice, Burgundy and others. The eyes of Christendom were squarely focused on Hunyadi and Wladislas. Frederick's interference would be duly noted and scorned. In addition the King of Germany had other pressing problems to attend to. In May the Swiss rose in rebellion against the Habsburgs. Like Wladislas, Frederick needed to secure his border with Hungary in order to march against another foe. He was also planning to preside over the Imperial Diet gathering in Nuremberg in order to deal with issues in the empire and did not wish for any distractions from these matters.[119] For these reasons he sent delegates to the island of Csepel, near Buda, to work out an agreement. Wladislas sent Hedervary, Lasocki and Cesarini to the meeting. Frederick was offering a two-year truce, *uti possidetis*. In the event of aggression and an incursion into the other's territory the culprit was to be tried under the laws of the one that had suffered the aggression. These terms were seized upon by Cesarini who pushed for their immediate acceptance. In exchange, Cesarini hoped that Frederick would offer up funds for the expedition and push for obedience to Eugene IV at the coming Reichstag in Nuremberg. Both of these hopes proved illusory, and the immense bargaining power that had been won by the crusaders through their successes against the Turks in the last several years were wasted in order to further the possibility of a campaign. The cardinal's diplomacy has been strongly criticized[120] as solely in the interests of the curia. Yet as Baczkowski points out,[121] Wladislas' reign in Hungary was based first and foremost on the anti-Ottoman crusade. Success in this endeavor was of utmost importance to the king, stemming not only from personal convictions but also from a need to bolster his reign. In any event, the truce with Frederick was signed on 21 May under the abovementioned terms. One obstacle to the crusade had now been removed.

The second major obstacle was funding. Długosz himself wrote that in 1444 the Royal Treasury of Hungary was empty. This was due in large part to the king's own profligacy, a trait forced upon Wladislas by his early cir-

[119] Wolkan, vol. I, nr. 150, pp. 340–342.
[120] Dąbrowski, pp. 143–144.
[121] Baczkowski, "Stosunek," pp. 31–32.

cumstances as well as a product of his own personality.[122] We have mentioned how the April diet and the king's increased authority sought to remove the causes of this debt, but this legislation did little to cover the immediate costs of the campaign. The kingdom as a whole was reluctant to fund the endeavor. This was in part because the crusade itself was in doubt. The Estates must have questioned the government's willingness to pay them back if the expedition were cancelled after funds had been collected. Despite such objections "after numerous negotiations/discussions held over this matter it was decided that certain towns and villages, both royal and baronial, would contribute a certain amount of money to the war, and that all cities and villages would be taxed."[123] The funds were collected throughout the month of June.[124]

Aside from this tax, Hunyadi himself had by July contributed 63,000 Florins for the campaign.[125] It must be remembered as well that Mahmud Chelebi and the other Ottoman prisoners had been redeemed for the handsome sum of 70,000 Florins.[126] To these funds could be added papal subsidies and money collected for the expedition from the church.[127] Prominent supporters such as John de Dominis or Simon Rozgony also contributed.

Fleet Preparations

On 10 April, 1444, Philip the Good commissioned Waleran de Wavrin as commander-in-chief of the four galleys to be constructed at the Venetian Arsenal as well as the large carvel and the other galleys which had been in

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122 Długosz, p. 296: "Erarium regium nullum erat, liberalitate enim adeo prodiga in universos usus est, ut plus erogaret quam sibi retineret."

123 Długosz, p. 296.

124 Pal, "Janos Hunyadi," writes that this tax amounted to "one gold florin." Is this one florin per village? Unfortunately I do not have access to the work he cites by Elmer Mályusz which presumably contains more details.

125 Katona, p. 271: "vero anno in praesenti ipse Ioannes vaivoda, bona bonis accumulare cupiens, similem magnum exercitum et potentiam Hungarorum cum suis propriis expensis, puta 63. millibus flor. auri absque auxilio et thesauro aliorum in subsidium eiusdem assignato, levando pro defensione eiusdem regni Hun. ac fidei christianae."

126 It is not certain, however, to whom this money went or whether it was earmarked to pay off other debts.

127 Eugene IV had ordered Andreas de Pallatio, the papal cubicularius in Poland, to hand over the funds collected from the Peter's Pence for the next two years to Wladislas to pay for the expedition (Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, vol. II, p. 86). See above for the controversy surrounding this decision due to Poland's conciliar affiliation.

port at Nice.[128] He was accompanied by the experienced Castilian commander Pierre Vazquez de Saavedra,[129] the Burgundian Gauvain Quiéret[130] and the Englishman Hugh John.[131] They had along with them 32 men and horses and letters of exchange worth 20,000 ducats.[132] The three men and their entourage left Bruges on 18 April and arrived in Venice between 12 and 18 May.[133] There, they found that the four vessels they had commissioned were not in fact ready, nor were the papal vessels the Venetians were to have constructed. The Venetians had been dragging their feet intentionally for two reasons. Most important was the issue of funding, the same problem that had doomed the fleet the previous year.[134] The Venetians estimated in 1443 that it would cost more than 20,000 ducats to build the hulls and rigging for ten papal galleys.[135] Now they had to provide the hulls and rigging for four Burgundian vessels as well. These were to be armed at the expense of the pope and the Burgundians respectively. The curia's treasury was depleted by the costs of the various unions, and income suffered on account of the schism. Cardinal Francis Condulmer, who was in charge of papal finances, was all too aware of this. The Venetians were willing to provide the hulls, rigging and crew for up to 12 ships (8 papal and 4 Burgundian) as well as several of their own vessels.

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[128] Paviot, *Les Ducs*, p. 99.

[129] A Castilian in the service of the Duke of Burgundy who accompanied Wavrin and served in many respects as his right-hand man. He was a strong and large man and quite competent in battle, known for his bravery and competence (*Anchiennes Chronicques d'Angleterre*, pp. 51–52, footnote). He had fought in France, England and Germany, as well as against the infidels both on land and at sea.

[130] Another significant commander in the Hundred Years War and in the service of the duke. See René Belleval, *Gauvain Quiéret: seigneur de Dreuil, et sa famille* (Paris, 1866).

[131] For the rest of the prominent members of the crew, see Paviot, *La politique*, p. 115.

[132] *Anchiennes Chronicques d'Angleterre*, p. 36, footnote. The document accords Waleran de Wavrin and Peter Vasque 1,240 salus (48 Gros) to cover Walleran's expenses, as well as the expenses of 32 persons and as many horses to go from Bruges to Venice, and from there to join up with the ships and sailors. During his trip, which is to begin 18 April, he is to pay for each soldier and horse (a combined unit, so 32 total units) a half salut per day, for 60 days, while they are traveling there and waiting for the ships, totaling 940 saluts. This left for Waleran 300 saluts. Also see DuPont, *Anchiennes Chronicques d'Angleterre*, pp. 36–37, footnote. Waleran receives from two Florentine merchants residing in Bruges letters of exchange worth 20,000 gold ducats. He is to receive the sum, and then hand it over to John Bayart, who had been commissioned by the Duke to disburse the funds for the fleet and the army [which are] "for the aid of Christendom."

[133] Paviot, *Les Ducs*, p. 100. Based on the Venetian letter mentioned below, it would seem Wavrin must have arrived on the twelfth.

[134] See Setton, The Papacy and the Levant, vol. II, pp. 84–85 and accompanying footnotes.

[135] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, p. 125.

As in 1443, the papacy (and Burgundians) would be responsible for arming the vessels. Though the Venetians ultimately agreed to allow funds from the tenth collected in the Republic to be used for the ships,[136] this in itself was not sufficient to cover the costs. Construction would wait until the pope could find the necessary funds to pay for arming the galleys.

The second reason for the delay in construction was a desire on the part of the Venetians to determine the intent of the other parties involved. They awaited with anticipation the report from their envoy in Buda, regarding the decision of the Hungarian Diet and the timetable for the land expedition.[137] They were waiting for Wavrin to arrive as well with the payment for his ships. The news arrived some time around 12 May, when the Venetian Senate wrote Cardinal Cesarini that they had received news of Wladislas' oath to undertake an expedition (see above). They informed Cesarini that the fleet was not yet ready, but that it would be in a matter of days.[138] They also informed him that Waleran de Wavrin had arrived in Venice to take command of the Burgundian vessels (and no doubt paid the Venetians as well with the funds he had received from the duke). They took the opportunity to press Cardinal Cesarini about getting the land expedition under way, echoing Cesarini's own argument to Wladislas that there would not be a better moment in their lifetimes to wage war on the Turks. It was now or never, and in order for the operation to succeed the land forces would need to get under way during the summer.[139]

The Hungarians do not seem to be the only ones who viewed the Serenissima's guarantees over the fleet with a bit of skepticism. In the face of

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[136] Though they complained that other city states such as Florence weren't taxed as hard. Genoa tried to avoid the tax completely, no doubt aware that their money would go to pay for ships under the command of their main rival Venice.

[137] This is evident in a letter from 6 April (*Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 42, pp. 90–91), in response to Cardinal Condulmer's request to set up a bank for the fleet funds in order to begin armament: "Rogamus suam Reverendissimam paternitatem ad differendum habere hanc nostrum responsionem, quousque secretarius noster quem missimus ad Serenissimum dominum Regem Polonie, sicut notum est Sue Reverendissime paternitati dabit nobis informationem, de bona executione exercitus, qua audita, contenti erimus, quod ponat banchum, et armet, nosque ad celerem expeditionem suam, omnes favores nostros, libenti animo, sibi dabimus."

[138] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 44, pp. 94–96.

[139] Ibid., "tamen Reverendissimam Paternitatem vestram quantum possumus excitamus, cum nostro iudicio cognoscamus quod nisi anno isto detur executio huic sancto operi amplius diebus nostris tempus tam accomodatum resque omnes tam bene disposite inveniri non poterunt, et etiam non accedente in tempore exercitu antedicto frustra esset accessus in strictum classis predicte."

Venetian delays, the Cardinal of Thérouanne requested that Wavrin send some or all of the Burgundian ships, both those already underway from Nice and the ones being outfitted in Venice, to the aid of Rhodes, which was under imminent threat of assault from the Mamelukes. Better to employ the ships where they could be of some use than have them sit in Venice while the Republic prevaricated. The papacy had been receiving urgent requests from the Rhodesian Hospitallers for some sort of assistance, and Eugene was willing to oblige them, particularly in the face of the stalled expedition against the Turks. The Venetians, however, refused to release the hulls they had provided to Wavrin for this secondary expedition. They were particularly insistent that their ships not be used for operations against the Mamelukes, with whom they maintained good trade relations. Waleran had no choice but to agree, and he only dispatched the four Burgundian ships outfitted earlier in Nice.

Geoffrey de Thoisy had been given command of these ships, while remaining under the superior command of Wavrin. He had already sailed to Corfu and was awaiting further instructions.[140] Wavrin informed him of the situation in Rhodes and ordered him to assist the beleaguered island. Thoisy happily complied. He and his men had been to Rhodes previously in 1441–1442 for the same reason and were familiar with the island. Furthermore, Thoisy was jealous of Wavrin's superior rank; the mission to Rhodes would grant him greater autonomy over his vessels. He and his men would perform famously at Rhodes that year, but their mission there delayed them such that neither Thoisy nor his four ships would be seen again by Wavrin until the crusader mission in the straits was already over.

The Papacy was unable to come up with the entire amount required to arm the galleys. Faced with this situation, and the prospect that they might have to abort the expedition once again, the Venetians agreed to finance with the papacy the remaining expense.[141] The ships were now quickly armed and all was ready by mid-June. The fleet expedition could now get under way. The papal galleys were the first to leave, the last of which disembarked along with Cardinal Condulmer on 22 June. Wavrin and Vazquez left on 6 July in their flagship, and the other three vessels of

[140] It is not certain if they were waiting at Corfu or perhaps had been present with the fleet at Venice. See Paviot, *La politique*, p. 116.

[141] Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, vol. II, p. 85, footnote 12. See also p. 86, footnote 16. On 28 August the Venetians informed Eugene IV that they had spent over 40,000 ducats on the fleet.

the Burgundian fleet left on 7and 8 July.[142] On 22 July the four Burgundian vessels, "which were truly and triumphantly well-equipped with many knights and gentlemen on board," arrived at Ragusa. They departed from the city on the next day, expecting that they would see Thoisy's vessels when they arrived at Modon.[143] They were in Corfu between 25 and 28 July,[144] still having seen no sign of Thoisy or his ships.

The papal vessels, which had been joined by the two ships from Ragusa,[145] were running about two weeks ahead of the Burgundians. Having left Ragusa on 6 or 7 July they reached Corfu on the 10th. They disembarked three days later, on 13 July, with five other Venetian ships that had joined the fleet en route. On 17 July they arrived at Modon. Perhaps hoping to find Thoisy and/or Wavrin, they waited there for three days before leaving port on 20 July.[146] The flotilla then headed for the straits, where they would link up with the Burgundians under Wavrin, who was still several days behind. The final composition of the fleet destined for the straits in the summer of 1444 was therefore 19 galleys: 8 Papal, 5 Venetian, 4 Burgundian and 2 Ragusan.[147] These would later be supplemented by two Byzantine ships after they reached the straits and began the blockade. The overall commander-in-chief of the expedition was the legate Cardinal Francis Condulmer. In terms of the various contingents, Condulmer was in direct charge of the eight papal vessels with Alviso Loredano as captain underneath him, and in direct command of

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142 Paviot, *La politique*, pp. 116–117. As the author notes, the date of 22 July given in Wavrin's chronicle is an error. The remainder of these dates are from the same work, pp. 116–133. The author also provides a good deal more detail regarding the composition of the fleet, its personnel, etc. The Venetians commanding and piloting the Duke's vessels received strict orders to obey Wavrin, except for if he (Wavrin) should try to divert the fleet. (Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, p. 179.) The letters are addressed to the "patrons" of the vessels, who were: Peter Giorgio, Jerome Morosini, Anthony Loredano and Andrew Contarini. According to their orders they are to be subordinate to Wavrin. They will not attack, under penalty of death, the ships of the Sudan (i.e. Mameluke Egypt), which they will try to avoid. They will not go to Rhodes. They will only attack the Egyptians if they are in the straits and on the orders of the legate and the pontifical captain. They will go without delay to the straits, avoiding conflicts with foreigners or the galleys of other nations. Similar orders were given to Alviso Loredano who was commanding (under Condulmer) the 8 papal vessels (Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 3, pp. 173–174).

143 Gelcich, nr. 273, pp. 457–459. This Ragusan report to their legate in Buda is one of the most important documents for determining the final composition of the fleet and its early progress.

144 *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 56, p. 126.

145 These left the city on 6 July (Krekić, Dubrovnik, nr. 156, p. 340).

146 *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 56, p. 126.

147 Ibid.

the five Venetian ships. Waleran de Wavrin was in charge of the Burgundian ships, and a Ragusan captain commanded the two vessels from his city.

When the Burgundian ships finally arrived at the island of Tenedos (Bozca Ada), where they tarried for two days, the Venetian, papal and Ragusan vessels had already been in the Dardanelles for a week or so. Cardinal Condulmer, the commander-in-chief of the fleet, had been bedridden with a severe illness. It was around the second week of August.

The Attack on Ibrahim Bey and Murad's Abdication

The events of the previous year had proved trying for Murad. The sultan was generally a proponent of peace, a meditative and speculative man, a patron of the arts, and one who enjoyed life's pleasures both within and outside the court. Yet the last twelve months had been both tragic and harrowing. In the summer of 1443 Murad had fought and made peace with Ibrahim Bey of Karaman. Soon after he had lost his eldest and beloved son Ala'eddin, his chosen successor. Perhaps to ease this loss Murad summoned his other son Mehmet to court soon after returning from the winter campaign of 1443/44. As we have seen, the Long March gave rise to a whole series of crises. The most significant was Ibrahim Bey's renewed insurrection in Anatolia in February 1444. The necessity of responding to this aggression was the single greatest factor driving the sultan to accept the harsh terms being posed by Hungary in the peace negotiations in Edirne that June. As noted by Cyriac of Ancona in a portion of a letter written between 12 and 18 June:[148]

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[148] The date of Murad's departure from Edirne into Anatolia is essential to what follows. The chronology given by Uzunçarşılı in 1937 ("İbrahim Beyin Karaman imareti vakfiyesi") seems to be based on a confusion of the preliminary Edirne treaty and the later ratification of this treaty in Hungary. Many of the Ottoman sources fail to make a disctinction between these two events (the Gazavat being a notable exception). A date for this crossing is provided in the Byzantine Emperor's letter to Wladislas, reprinted in full by Długosz (pp. 302–304). İnalcik (*Fatih Devri*, p. 64) and others, relying on this account (or more specifically on Halecki who in turn refers to the letter) dated the crossing as 12 July. This is because in the Byzantine letter, dated "30 July," (see below) it is written: "facilius Omarathus (*Murad*), Grecia derelicta, ad tutandam Asiam se converteret, quemadmodum eum fecisse die duodecima presentis mensis intelleximus." Krystyna Łukasiewicz has recently argued ("The Real Date of the Szeged Manifesto," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 60, pt. 4 (2007): 447–454) that the date on this letter is based on an erroneous reading of the original Greek date, and should be 30 June, not 30 July. As Łukasiewicz points out, according to Byzantine conventions Greek

> And perhaps this proud prince (Murad) would not have lost those towns that he so broadly restored had he not been just on the point of setting out against Karaman with the better part of his army. For he had learned that this puissant prince in Asia was prepared [to wage] a mighty war against the Turkish sultan himself and was already poised to lay waste his provinces and had begun to seize his towns. This was why he decided, a few days later, to cross the Hellespont and lead his forces vigorously into Asia, leaving his son [Mehmet] Chelebi in Thrace with a few legions and with Halil Pasha as his principal associate.[149]

As mentioned earlier Ibrahim Bey, in conjunction with the Byzantines, had seized and plundered a number of areas in Anatolia between January

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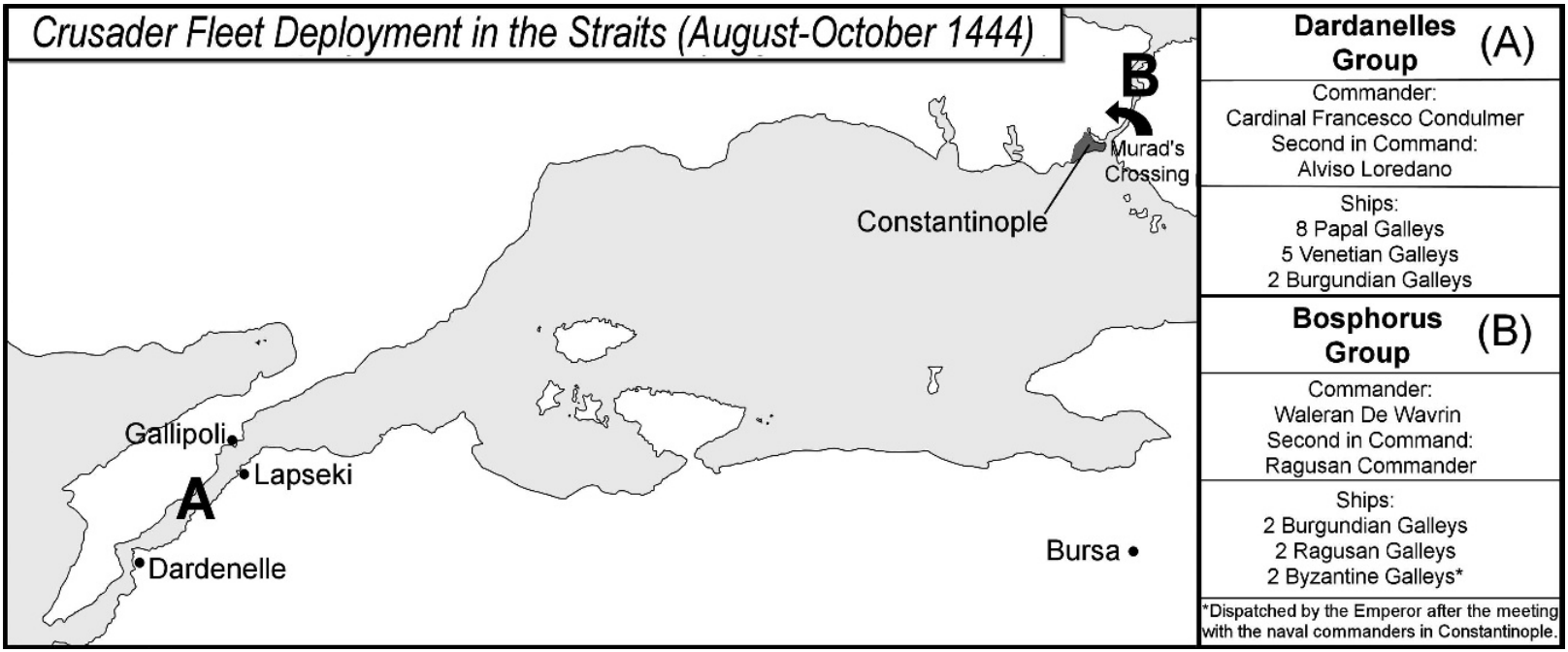
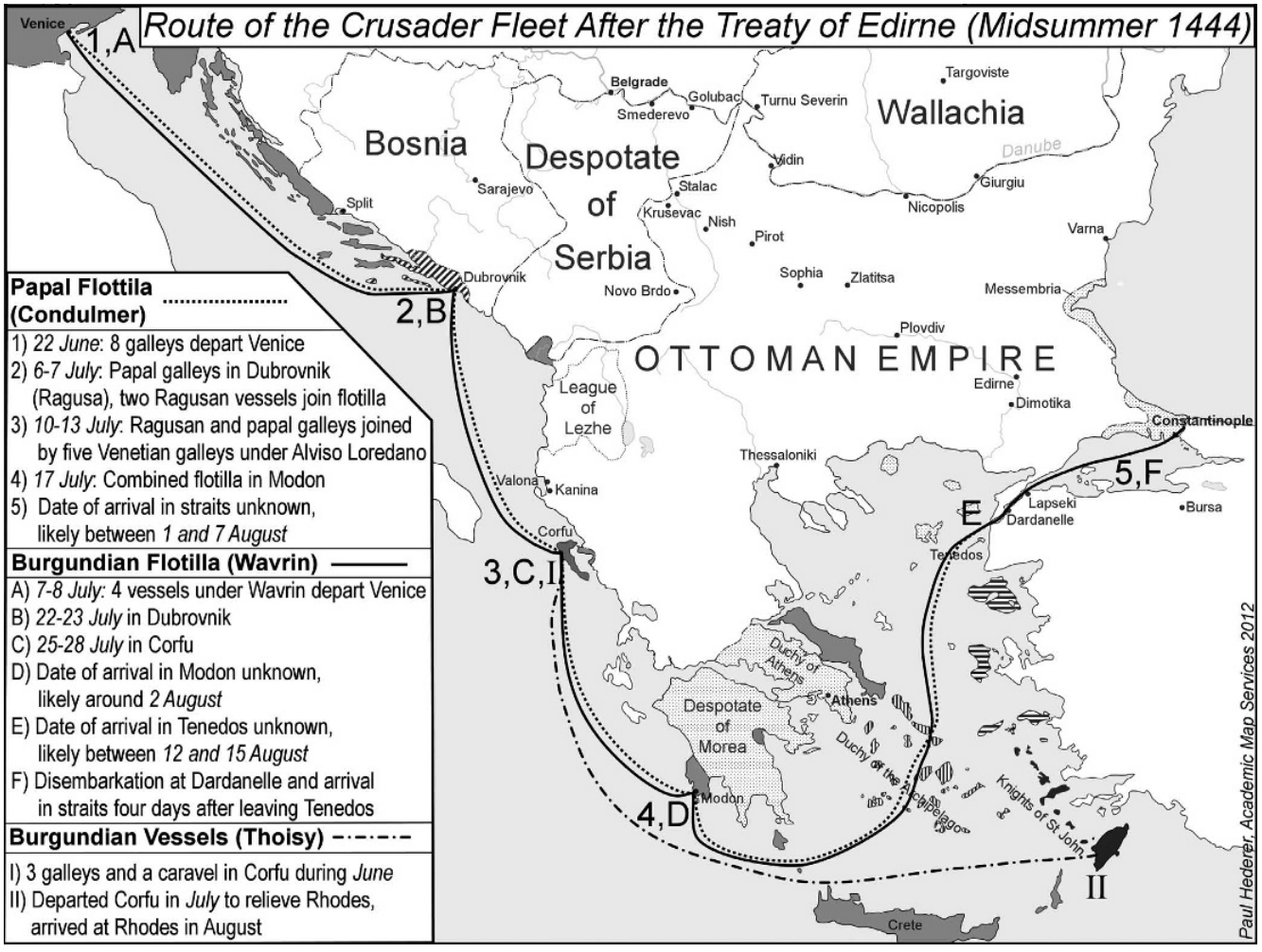
dates were always written counting backwards from the current month, i.e. 1 February would actually be 31 January, 2 February would be by our reckoning January 30th, 3 February equals January 29th, etc. Therefore 30 July is actually June 30th. There is much more to support her argument than even she herself mentions. In another lengthy analysis of this letter by A. Hohlweg ("Kaiser Johannes VIII. Palaiologos und der Kreuzzug des Jahres 1444," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 73 (1980): 14–24), the author takes issue not with the date, but with the author, arguing that it is in fact the Morean despot Constantine and not John VIII. Be that as it may, Hohlweg, well-versed in Byzantine epistolary sources, points out that Byzantine letters to the west from this period had the date and signature of the letter in Greek, whereas the contents of the text itself were always written in Latin. In other words, Długosz or some other copyist must have translated the name, date and place of issue at the end of the letter from Greek into Latin. Whoever copied this date did so verbatim, and failed to re-calculate it into a western calendar date. As regards Murad's crossing, the date given in the actual text of the letter, as cited above, is "the twelfth day of this month." Łukasiewicz again reckons this date by the Byzantine formula, arriving at a date of 20 June. I am less convinced that this date should also be recalculated in the Greek style, since it is part of the Latin contents of the letter, not the Greek opening and closing. But in truth it matters little since the difference between the Greek and Latin reckoning, or between 12 June and 20 June, is only a week. The letter therefore suggests that Murad crossed into Anatolia around mid-June and not mid-July. The above-quoted text from Cyriac also supports a mid-June date for the crossing. This is explicitly stated in a letter from Cyriac to John Hunyadi on 24 June (Bodnar, nr. 11, pp. 51–52). Here he repeats the news, writing in the past tense, that Murad had "left his son Chelebi in Thrace with his principal colleague, Halil Pasha, and chose personally to cross the Hellespont with most of his divisions and to lead the great strength of his army into Asia." Cyriac had traveled to Constantinople after leaving Edirne (he arrived in Pera on 24 June where he drafted his letter), and no doubt informed both the Emperor and Constantine Dragas of the news of the peace agreement and Murad's crossing. He had kept them similiarly informed of crusade developments in 1443 (see earlier part of this chapter). Indeed, it is likely that it was Cyriac's arrival, with the copies he had made of the treaties, etc., (see Bodnar, nr. 9) that prompted the emperor (or Dragas) to write the above-mentioned letter from 30 June. In any case, it is certain that Murad crossed into Asia sometime between 12 June and 24 June 1444, quite likley on June 20th, but certainly not in July as has been heretofore accepted.

[149] Bodnar, nr. 9, p. 39.



Map 5a. The crusader fleet in 1444.



Map 5b. The crusader fleet in 1444.

and March, 1444. It was for this reason, as Cyriac's letter makes clear, that Murad was in such a hurry to move into Anatolia and punish Ibrahim Bey before his insurrection, already over a month or two old, could spread. Ibrahim Bey's offensive was prompted first by rumors that the Hungarians had defeated the Ottomans, and then by Byzantine assurances that both the fleet and land components of the crusade expedition would soon be underway. The Byzantines, aware of the importance of timing to the ultimate success of the operation, had done all they could to coordinate with Karaman in the combined anti-Ottoman offensive they had been told would begin early summer.[150] Despite the mention in some Ottoman chronicles which suggest direct contact between Hungary and Karaman, there is no documentary evidence to support this from either Latin or Ottoman sources. Even Murad's petition for condemnation sent to the four Cairene judges mentions only an agreement between Byzantium and Karaman, with the correct implication of course that this constituted part of a larger coordinated operation involving the Hungarians as well. Both Wladislas and Ibrahim Bey were aware of one another's activities, but the intermediaries and handlers were the Byzantines of the Morea and Constantinople, not Hungary.[151]

Ibrahim Bey, as well as the Byzantines, had first assumed that the crusade expedition would take place in the early months of 1444 (see above). Cesarini and the papacy then led the Byzantines (as well as the Venetians and others) to believe that it would take place by early summer. The Ottoman Porte naturally took advantage of the hobbled coordination and communication. The negotiations in Edirne and the later peace treaty ratified in August were not only a reasonable guarantee of Ottoman security but a weapon to dishearten the other members of the coalition by showing that the Hungarians had no intention of actually launching an expedition. It was for this reason that Murad's campaign against Ibrahim Bey in 1444 proceeded so quickly. Sometime between 12 and 24 June

[150] The Gazavât makes clear mention of the Byzantine role in 1444. (Imber's translation, pp. 71–72)

[151] A clear example is the Byzantine letter from 30 June discussed above. In it, the Byzantines write (Długosz, p. 302): "Quas ob res vestro nomine et singulari auctoritate et felicitate moti sunt principes et populi Christianorum, eius subditi, colligati, vicini et coadherentes ; sed etiam eius fidei complices, Caramannus videlicet, qui magnam Asiam orientalis partem suis viribus et exercitu usque ad maria adeptus est. Huic eciam additi sunt filii Karanlugk et plures alii." The informative tone of this passage indicates the Byzantine intermediary role. There is even a hint of remorse in the passage that they might somehow end up letting Ibrahim Bey (and other Balkan and Anatolian insurrectionists) down.

Murad crossed over into Asia and marched, with the intent of holy war,[152] with the assembled armies of Anatolia.[153] The appearance of the sultan at the head of his army must have shocked Ibrahim Bey. The Karamanid knew that if Ottoman Rumelia truly faced invasion and the straits were threatened with closure then the sultan would not have risked crossing with his armies into Anatolia, potentially separating himself from his court and capital. Murad's arrival in Asia meant that the sultan did not believe such a threat existed.[154] Reports of the peace negotiations in Edirne as well as documents which the Porte itself could produce[155] confirmed this suspicion. Murad and his men marched to Yenişehir, which had not long ago been retaken by Karaman's troops. Ibrahim Bey, feeling deserted by the Christians, retreated far south to Varsak[156] and sent a delegation, headed by Mullah Sarı Yakub,[157] to plead for peace. The sultan, despite Ibrahim's repeated perjuries in the past, seemed receptive. Though nothing could have been more distasteful to Murad than settling for peace with a prince who had thrice in the last decade attacked his lands after explicit oaths to the contrary, the Porte needed desperately to stabilize the empire. Murad was even willing to cede some of the territories which had been ceded by Karaman in 1437, to include Akşehir, Beyşehir and Okluk fortress.

The Ottoman-Karamanid treaty has survived to this day.[158] In it, Ibrahim Bey stipulates that he will not commit any wrong against Murad, his

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[152] نية الغزاة (Gazavât manuscript, 34a). The designation of this invasion as Holy War was based on the decision of the Cairene judges (see above).

[153] The fact that Murad left the Army of Rumelia, the Soldiers of the Porte and the janissaries in place in Edirne and only marched with the Army of Anatolia (Gazavât, Imber's translation, p. 73; Oruç Bey, p. 64), shows that despite the Edirne negotiations the Porte was in fact still quite wary of a crusader invasion and the blocking of the straits.

[154] Many of the Ottoman sources indeed suggest that when Murad crossed into Asia the peace was already a done deal, (for example Oruç Bey, p. 64). The Gazavât is the only Ottoman source to mention the ratification process. This is not written to somehow call into question the fact of the ratification process, which is incontrovertible, only to demonstrate that in the historical consciousness of the time the proceedings in Edirne seemed to have been for the Ottomans more significant.

[155] One has to assume that there was an Ottoman version of the unratified terms of the ten-year truce as well.

[156] This is reported in Zaifi's Gazavâtname. The area referred to is likely Taş-ili, a Varsak-controlled region neighboring with Karaman that was often a place of refuge for the Karamanids.

[157] Oruç Bey, p. 64. Gazavât (Imber's translation, p. 73).

[158] It was first published by Uzunçarşılı in 1937 ("İbrahim Beyin Karaman imareti vakfiyesi"). Imber recently translated the text into English, from which I draw my citation (Imber's translation, pp. 203–204).

son Mehmet, or any of Murad's subjects or dependants. "Nor will I incite anyone to show enmity or become the helper or accomplice of anybody who wishes to do so... I have become a friend to their friend and an enemy to their enemy." In the most explicit reference to Karaman's dealings with the Christians, the treaty states: "I will send neither agent, nor word, nor letter, in secret or in public, to the enemies of Murad Bey, whether Muslim or infidel, who do not wish for his prosperity and high estate. I will inform Murad Bey and his son Mehmet Bey, word for word, of the letters and information that come to me from their enemies and from those who wish them evil." Karaman also agreed to provide a contingent of troops to Murad under the command of his son, an obligation he would soon fulfill at Varna, fighting against the very army that was supposed to have come to his aid.

Having averted the threat from Karaman, Murad made the curious but not altogether unpredictable decision of abdicating to his son Mehmet.[159] Murad's accession to the throne after his father's death had been plagued by years of civil war among rival claimants. He hoped to avoid this by establishing the succession before his own passing. These practical considerations were strengthened by personal ones; Murad sought some respite from the stressful fatigue, physical and emotional, that the last year had brought. Regardless of the sultan's personal intentions, Halil Pasha and others at court must have had some complicity in the decision as well. Perhaps Halil thought that he could govern the twelve-year-old Mehmet better than he could manage Murad. In any case, Murad did not resume the throne after the campaign against Ibrahim Bey. Instead he retired from government and moved his court to Bursa.[160]

Upon learning of the Ottoman succession the Byzantines seized the opportunity to release, as they had in the past, a rival claimant to the

[159] See İnalcik's chapter in Fetih Devri Uzerinde regarding Mehmet the Conqueror's first accession to the throne (the chapter titled "İlk Culûs," pp. 55–67). Franz Babinger had dealt earlier with this subject in his article "Von Amurath zu Amurath." This article, written in German, has been the main reference for most non-Turkish historians. İnalcik owes a debt to Babinger for being the first to treat this period in detail. Yet İnalcik, who had newer sources availabe to him and who was able to draw more extensively on other existing Ottoman sources improved considerably on Babinger's work. I draw most of my information for this period from the above-mentioned description by İnalcik.

[160] Ibid., p. 67. As İnalcik points out, it was not until after his second abdication, i.e. after the Battle of Varna, that Murad went to Magnisa.

throne.[161] This was the so-called "False Orhan."[162] With support from Byzantium the claimant moved to İnceğiz, about 50 km northwest of Constantinople, where he hoped anti-Murad supporters would flock to him in droves. This failed to occur, and unable to find support for his candidacy Orhan fled north to Dobrudja,[163] as had other Ottoman claimants in the past. After heading north he succeeded in seizing "all the land on the other side of the mountains." One reason for the claimant's lack of support was the perception that Orhan was a pawn of the Christian powers who were intent on destroying the Dar Al-Islam. This could hardly motivate the ghazis and other members of the military class to join him. In addition, although he had abdicated to Mehmet, Murad was still alive and could easily resume the throne if needed to crush the rival claimant. Mehmet's legitimacy could be contested. Murad's could not. Indeed, this is precisely the course of action the divan took. Mahmud Pasha Kassaboğlu was sent to Bursa in order to summon Murad back to Edirne and alleviate the crisis.[164] In the meantime, the Beylerbey of Rumelia, Şehabeddin Pasha, moved with the army of Rumelia quickly north in pursuit of Orhan. Orders were given to block off all approaches to Edirne, denying the claimant a route back to the capital should he succeed in raising recruits. Unable to raise the requisite support Orhan fled in desperation. He snuck through the forests of Dobrudja to the coast barely escaping Şehabeddin and his men. From there he traveled to Midye. Despite Şehabeddin's swift and determined pursuit the Ottoman pretender was able to make it back to Constantinople and avoid capture. Despite this setback, the crisis itself had been eradicated and Orhan no longer posed a threat.

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[161] The Gazavât (pp. 37–38; Imber's translation, pp. 74–75) is the only source to discuss this event at length.

[162] The Gazavât does not give his name, but his identity as Orhan was established by İnalcik (Fatih Devri, pp. 69–70, esp. footnote 2). Orhan would die fighting against Mehmet II and the Ottomans at Constantinople in 1453, at which time he was still relatively young. Though he was a member of the Ottoman dynasty, his lineage is not entirely certain based on the conflicting and sometimes false statements in the chronicles.

[163] This was a forested region in Bulgaria north of Varna and bordering on Wallachian territory.

[164] The dispatch of Mahmud Pasha is confusing in the Gazavât. According to the source, he was sent to fetch Murad during the crisis with Orhan and after news of the crusader invasion arrived. Was he sent twice? There is no mention in the Gazavât as to Murad's response to this crisis. He returned to Edirne only after news of the crusader invasion. Did the two occur simultaneously?

The Ratification of the Peace Treaty

At the same time that Murad was leaving for Anatolia the Porte dispatched an ambassador to Poland named Süleyman Baltaoğlu.[165] He was accompanied by a delegation of 100 horsemen and laden with lavish gifts. His mission was to obtain Wladislas', Hunyadi's and Branković's personal ratification of the Edirne peace agreement. While this embassy was making its way toward Hungary war preparations in the kingdom were well under way. The topic of who would receive which territories at the end of the campaign was already being discussed.[166] Taxes levied for the expedition were collected throughout the month of June.[167] By early July Hunyadi's men were already assembling.[168] The king wrote a letter to Skanderbeg in Albania, exhorting him to rise up against the Ottomans so that together they might expel the Turks and avenge past wrongs.[169] He wrote another letter to the citizens of Florence,[170] declaring openly his intention to wage a campaign against the Turks. He and his men were to gather in Vidin on the 15th of July and soon after cross over into Turkish-

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[165] He was a Bulgarian, but was raised in the Ottoman court. He remained a trusted servant of Murad's throughout his reign, and at the time he was sent to Hungary as ambassador in 1444 he held the title of *Kapıcıbaşı*, or Chief Door Keeper. He would later become the Ottoman fleet commander at the siege of Constantinople in 1453. Due to his failures there he seems to have been stripped of rank and office.

[166] *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, p. 113. On 4 July the Venetians wrote to Reguardatis, asking him to seek Gallipoli, Thessaloniki, Panidos and Marignano as compensation for their contributions. As mentioned above, the Ragusans wanted the Albanian cities of Valona and Canina.

[167] Engel, "Janos Hunyadi," see above note discussing this tax.

[168] Hunyadi wrote a letter on 2 July to those assembling for the campaign. It is addressed: "Universis et singulis dominis baronibus, proceribus, nobilibus, stipendariis cuiuscumque etiam alterius status et conditionis hominibus in exercitum contra perfidiam saevissimorum Turcorum instaurandis totiens quotiens progredientibus dominis fratribus et amicis nostris honorandis Johannes de Hwnyad vaivoda Transsilvanus, Siculorumque et Themesiensis ac de Zolnok comitatuum comes salutem cum honoris incrementa." The letter asks these men assembling not to disturb Cardinal Szecsi's lands in Transylvania, or the lands of any other subjects, as they are marching through to the assembly point. Some, such as Halecki, argue that the king's ongoing preparations are evidence he was making no overtures for peace. Yet evidence that Hunyadi was likewise preparing for war, despite negotiating for peace, gives the lie to this argument. Both were preparing for war while at the same time keeping the peace option open.

[169] Katona, pp. 300–303. The authenticity of this letter is a matter of controversy. (Francisc Pall, "Skanderbeg et Janco de Hunedoara (Jean Hunyadi)," *Studia Albanica* V, part 1 (1968): 103–107, p. 105) points out that Barletius falsified the correspondence between the king and Skanderbeg. Yet Hauziński ("Faktor Albański," pp. 55–56) argues that this letter in particular might be authentic, and that it derives from an earlier source.

[170] Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. 2, p. 404.

controlled Bulgaria. "This summer in accordance with the will of all of our subjects we have decreed that we will march again against the Turks. [We will go] by another route through a certain crossing of the Danube in the area of Nicopolis which, however, the Turks occupy with their armed galleys and galliotes." Unable to march through a neutral Serbia, the plan was therefore to cross the Danube at Nicopolis and then march south from Wallachia into Ottoman-controlled Rumelia. Crossing the Danube with such a large army in the face of a hostile enemy was one of the more difficult aspects of this plan. In order to ensure a safe crossing Cesarini requested the dispatch of several galleys from the papal fleet to the Danube to help bring the troops across.[171]

The king remained in Buda throughout July and did not go to Vidin as stated.[172] His plans, it would seem, were postponed while he and the court considered what to do about the peace terms hammered out in Edirne.[173] News of the negotiations in the Ottoman capital seem to have reached Branković on 3 July. On this date he signed over a portion of his lands to Hunyadi, presumably as payment for the voivode's work in advocating on Branković's behalf with the king and at court in the interests of the peace agreement.[174] The agreement with the sultan was not the only piece of news to reach Buda in July. As mentioned, Condulmer had departed from Venice on 22 June and he was the last among those in the papal contingent of eight ships to disembark.[175] There can be no doubt

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171 *Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 49 and nr. 50. In letters from July 4th the Venetians ask Condulmer and Loredano after they have reached the straits to send eight galleys up the Danube to Nicopolis, or wherever else the cardinal should like, in order to assist in the crossing. These plans were not carried out.

172 Sroka, "Itinerarium," p. 164.

173 Andreas de Pallatio (*Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, p. 460) writes about the preparations for the campaign : "sed non potuit in termino constituto delectas ad hoc copias aggregare neque cum ipsis omnibus transfretare Danubium propter tractatum pacis." Długosz writes that Hunyadi had informed the king of the terms of the treaty and asked Wladislas to arrive in Szeged by 1 August in order to meet with the Turkish emissaries. In order for the king to reach Szeged in time, this letter must have been sent some time before 22 July, meaning news of the terms had reached Hunyadi by then.

174 Engel, "Janos Hunyadi," p. 246.

175 In the above-mentioned letter to Florence Wladislas informs the duke that the vessels have already been dispatched to the straits, perhaps a sign that this news had already reached him: "maritima classe nobis opitulante, quam pro tanto bono faciendo sanctissimus dominus, dominus noster Eugenius papa et illustrissimus consanguineus noster dominus dux Burgundie, necnon inclitum dominium Venetorum, instruxerunt et in fauces Galypolis transmiserunt." It seems impossible, however, that news of Condulmer's departure could have reached the king in only ten days. It is more likely that the

that he sent word to Cesarini to inform him that he and his ships were underway. This news must have reached the court around mid to late July, a few days before Gisdanić and his entourage returned from their embassy to Edirne. Condulmer's departure did not mean the fleet's mission was complete. His contingent of eight vessels was not even half the number projected. There were still the four Burgundian ships under Wavrin, the five additional ships the Venetians were offering and the two from Ragusa. The journey to the straits was long and unpredictable.[176] Yet the fact that a good portion of the fleet, as well as its commander, had set sail before the end of June would have been welcome news to Cesarini and given a boost to the war party.

Cesarini's hopes, raised by news of Condulmer's departure, must have been deeply confounded when he heard of the generous terms the Turks were offering for peace. Baltaoğlu and his embassy were due to arrive in Szeged just before August. The king moved his court there to meet with him on the appointed date of August 1st. The fact that he made this rather lengthy detour to a town on the southern border of his kingdom to meet with the embassy, instead of inviting it to the capital, is in itself an indication that Wladislas wanted to keep the profile of the Turkish embassy relatively low. This does not mean he was the only one to attend. The king could not disregard the Royal Diet when such a momentous decision was to be made, and many of the diet's members accompanied him to Szeged as well. The citizens of Buda and the remaining subjects in the kingdom were not to be privy to these events. In part, this was to keep Wladislas from looking ridiculous in the face of the many oaths he had already sworn and the assurances he had made regarding the war. The king, hoping to keep up appearances, even seems to have feigned confusion at Baltaoğlu's initial public audience.[177] Unshaken by such treatment, the

king is referring to several vessels which departed earlier in June. As we know from the Venetians' letter (*Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 48, p. 106), Condulmer's ship was the last of the papal vessels to depart on 22 June. Others seem to have left a week or two earlier, and to have arrived in the straits earlier as well.

[176] As a general reference, in the year 1437 Byzantine representatives to the Council of Florence left Constantinople on 19 November and arrived in Venice on 30 December (Gill, *The Council of Florence*, pp. 88–89), i.e. a journey of 41 days. This was not the ship carrying the emperor, whose boat made numerous stops along the way to pay visits to his family.

[177] In the Gazavât (p. 35; Imber's translation, p. 72) Baltaoğlu is asked as the embassy is introduced to the king if he is a merchant who has come to buy goods: "Speaking to Baltaoğlu, the King said: 'Who are you? And why did you come here? Or have you come as a trader to buy merchandise?' Baltaoğlu replied: 'What makes you say that? Do I look

Ottoman ambassador performed his mission tersely and professionally. He delivered his gifts to the king, stated the terms of the peace (see above), and then, as Długosz wrote, "the Greek was quiet."[178]

The prospect of peace under such generous terms won over numerous supporters in a kingdom already weary of conflict. As Długosz recorded:

> All of the Hungarian barons and prelates, a number of whom were present for this spectacle on the king's orders,[179] determined, argued and decided that this peace treaty with so many advantageous provisions could not be turned down. They knew the amount of their own blood which had been spilled in the siege of Golubac castle which could now be recouped without bloodshed. [They also knew] the significance of Smederevo fortress, which was second to none in the strength of its locale and construction; or the value of Novo Brdo, which stood out for its copious silver mines, likewise all of Serbia and part of Albania.

The advantages of the treaty were undeniable, and the majority of the Hungarian nobility seemed behind it. Yet there were several arguments which might dissuade the king from ratifying it. A few of these are stated in the sources;[180] the remainder can be surmised from the context. The

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like a merchant? No, I am not a trader. It is just that you sent an envoy and begged our Padishah for peace. My Padishah sent me here to find out what your answer is and to give him certain news." Łukasiewicz cites this passage as possible evidence that the king was indeed unaware of the negotiations. It is impossible to believe, however, that the king was not informed of the embassy until the moment Baltaoğlu appeared before him. Even Długosz (p. 299) says that the king had been informed of the embassy and the peace terms prior to leaving for Szeged: "Cercior Wladislas rex de his, que per despotum Georgium et Ioannem woiewodam cum Turcorum cesare pacta erant, per literas et nuncios factus, rogatur, ut Segedinum pro prima die Augusti descendat, Turcorum cesaris nuncios illic ad pacem petendam venturos auditurus." Furthermore, the Gazavât (p. 30; Imber's translation, pp. 68–69) makes it very clear that Wladislas was complicit in the peace negotiations and in full agreement with the decision to send peace emissaries to Murad in Edirne earlier that summer. Łukasiewicz herself (p. 449) argues that "already in July the king must have known the conditions of the Adrianople peace." What is most likely taking place here is a display of ignorance meant as an act of showmanship for the others at court. After all, the king had a vested interest in making the Venetian ambassador Reguardatis, the Ragusan ambassador, and others at his court believe that he had been determined the entire time to go to war. These men were present at Szeged, as well as a number of other barons and prelates of Hungary (Długosz, p. 301).

[178] Długosz, p. 300. Długosz refers to Baltaoğlu as a renegade Greek, a reference to his Bulgarian origins.

[179] The number and names of the barons and prelates present is visible on the Act of Szeged itself.

[180] The peace arguments are in Długosz (p. 301), and in the letter sent by the Polish Diet in Piotrków. The war arguments appear in the Byzantines' letter from 30 June described above.

fact that the sultan was willing to give up so much was a clear indication of his own weakness and predicament. This weakness should be exploited, Cesarini and others would argue, in order to deal a death blow to the Ottomans once and for all. Though peace might enable the kingdom to strengthen and regroup, it would give the Ottomans the same opportunity. Another argument was that the king had an obligation to his allies, i.e. the Papacy, the Burgundians, the Byzantines, the Venetians, even the Prince of Karaman. He had solicited financial and military support from these allies. To let them down now would ruin the kingdom's credibility and make it impossible to conduct joint operations in the future. Hungary would have to fight the next war with the Turks alone. Against this latter argument, the peace party could counter that there was no evidence that the allies had or would come through. Yes, the ships had left Venice. But were the straits blocked? Had Ibrahim Bey succeeded in drawing the sultan into Asia? The answer was yes, but none of this news had yet reached the kingdom. As far as the Diet was concerned, if Hungary were to deny this generous peace, it was quite likely it would find itself abandoned by its allies and unable to prosecute a war on its own. In other words, it would walk away with absolutely nothing.

The remainder of the discussion between Baltaoğlu and the king (and presumably Hunyadi, Cesarini and Branković as well)[181] took place in secret.[182] It is impossible to know precisely what was said, though one important fragment has emerged.[183] Wladislas asked Baltaoğlu if he could immediately deliver the castles promised in the terms. He said he could deliver them within eight days.[184] Upon hearing this the king agreed to

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[181] Długosz does not say who was involved in this *secretum consilium*. In the Gazavât, after the embassy's presentation before the king, Branković and Baltaoğlu first speak to one another to confirm that Branković will indeed receive Smederevo. Baltaoğlu affirms, but on the condition that Branković, the king and Hunyadi swear an oath that they will not wage war again on the Ottomans. Later these three consult with one another, and Baltaoğlu is called back into the king's presence, at which point the swift handover is agreed on condition that these three men swear an oath and draw up treaties.

[182] Długosz, ut supra: "*Legacione hac in secretum consilium redacta*."

[183] Gazavât, p. 35; Imber's translation, p. 73. If one follows Engel's theory, then it is quite possible that this passage does not refer to Szeged, but to the talks at Oradea/Varad.

[184] The eight-day deadline is mentioned in Długosz, p. 301, but it coincides with the dates given in the Serbian Annals (see below). This insistence on a swift handover of the fortresses is the only concrete piece of information we have from these discussions but it appears in both Turkish and non-Turkish sources and may give some clues to these shadowy negotiations. One reason for the king's insistence on a swift handover, overlooked by historians, concerns the crusaders' own strategy for the campaign. The crusaders were unable to march through a neutral Serbia, and were therefore obliged to

ratify the treaty. Just several weeks later, in direct contradiction to this oath, crusader armies were marching into Ottoman territory intent on driving the Turks from Europe.

The ratification and subsequent violation of the Hungarian-Ottoman treaty of 1444 has been the focus of a lot of the discussion surrounding the war. The secretive nature of the negotiations and the events following them have made it impossible for historians to determine with certainty what happened that summer. Why did Wladislas ratify a treaty and then immediately break it? When and where did the ratification occur, if it indeed occurred at all? What were the motivations behind the various parties to the treaty and the subsequent decision to go to war? Despite numerous attempts to answer these questions much still remains a mystery.

Most recently Łukasiewicz, arguing that the treaty was signed on 4 August, offers the following timeline of events:

> It is possible therefore to establish that the Turkish embassy was received by the king on August 1st, as announced in advance. Next day, the council of the Hungarians took place. On the third day the king, Branković and Hunyadi took oaths to keep the treaty and the treaty in writing was being prepared. The treaty would be ready therefore and sealed by the king on August 4th. Soon afterwards the news arrived from the commanders of the allied fleet.[185]

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cross the Danube in the east. This required them to cross in the face of enemy resistance, and in particular in the vicinity of the fleet of Turkish galleys stationed in Golubac. This is why Cesarini had earlier requested significant fleet support on the river. This support would not, and could not arrive for a couple more months, for Condulmer's ships had only recently made it into the straits. The earlier plan was to cross the Danube near Nicopolis, as made plain in Cesarini and Wladislas' letters from July. Yet the Szeged manifesto mentions specifically and for the first time Orshova as the place of assembly and crossing. The city lies quite a ways to the west of Nicopolis. In September, when the army did eventually cross, they did so at Orshova, easily achieving naval superiority with only the ships they had on hand. This crossing, which took place over four days, would have been much more difficult if the Ottomans had maintained possession of Golubac and the river fleet stationed there. The hasty timetable set for the handover of the fortresses was not simply to allow Branković to take quick possession of his lands, but to enable the crusaders to more easily accomplish their strategic goals. This would have convinced even the war hawks of the advantages of enacting the peace—with the added understanding that the said peace would immediately be broken.

[185] Łukasiewicz, p. 450. She argues that the news of the fleet mentioned here regarded the Burgundian ships that had sailed from Ragusa on 22 July. Długosz is specific that the news about the fleet received was from Cardinal Condulmer, and that the news mentioned that the ships were in the straits.

It was news of the fleet, as well as the letter from the Byzantines regarding the situation in Asia that according to Łukasiewicz prompted the king to renounce the treaty and go to war.[186] The third item, that the treaty was prepared on August third, and then signed and sealed on the fourth, is more problematic. Łukasiewicz' argument is based on a passage in the Gazavât which makes mention of a Byzantine letter (according to Łukasiewicz, the Byzantine letter dated 30 June) that reached the Hungarian court *after* Wladislas and the sultan had made peace ("barışık olup").[187] Długosz suggests this letter arrived soon after August 4th (see below). According to the Gazavât, the letter was then read aloud whereupon Wladislas renounced his oath and decided to go to war. Yet the passage in the Gazavât does not say that the letter was read or arrived on August 4th, only that it reached the king after the peace agreement had been made.[188]

But to which "peace agreement" does this refer. Many Turkish sources write as if the Ottomans and Hungarians were at peace following the June treaty in Edirne, i.e. before Murad left to fight Ibrahim Bey. In this passage in the Gazavât there is no clear indication that the agreement referred to is either the treaty drawn up in Edirne, or the ratification process which took place in Hungary in August. Furthermore, the Gazavât does not mention one, but two letters which arrived after the peace had been made. The first one arrived, and because "the king was at peace with the House of Osman," the letter was ignored. Then a second letter arrived. This is the one that the Gazavât states was read aloud and the decision when the decision was made for war. If we accept that in both cases the peace here refers to the ratification of the treaty in Szeged, an interpretation I find highly doubtful, then the Byzantines must have sent two emissaries only a few days apart, both carrying letters for the king, but only one of which had the desired effect! In short, the Gazavât's account of the correspondence with John VIII, though no doubt accurate in its general outlines, is a poor basis for dating the ratification of the treaty of Edirne or the Szeged manifesto.[189]

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[186] The essential importance of the news of the fleet to these events was first put forth by Dąbrowski in *L'Année 1444*.

[187] Gazavât, p. 39.

[188] Imber's translation, pp. 76–77.

[189] If we accept Engel's theory, that the ratification took place in Oradea on 15 August, then it may be that the letters were received by the Byzantine king but only read aloud and publicized when Wladislas' decision to go to war was itself made public—after the departure of the Turkish embassy.

Długosz suggests that the letter informing the court of the current political and military situation arrived shortly after the king left Szeged. This passage is also worth quoting because it is highly relevant to these events:

> Letters arrived to those departing from Szeged from Francis (Condulmer) the Cardinal of San Clemente, the captain of the apostolic fleet, as well as from the other leaders of the Burgundian, Venetian and Genoese (sic!) galleys and ships stating: that a strong army with the fleet was in the straits, and that they had ensured that the Turks would not be able to pass from Anatolia into Rumelia. The king is requested by these letters to back up his promises with deeds and swiftly lead an army into the land of Rumelia. With the Emperor of the Turks in Anatolia and with all of his forces waging war on the Tartars he could recoup all of Europe with little effort. Moreover the Emperor of Constantinople John Palaeologus sent letters to Wladislas by a special messenger, ensuring the great hope of victory and liberation of Europe, and asserting that one must be wary of the false and fictitious peace treaties sought by the Turk...[190]

The chronicler states that the letters regarding the fleet reached the king and his men as they were leaving Szeged (*Szeged discedentibus*). He must be to some extent mistaken about their contents, but it is clear that they provided an assurance that the fleet had disembarked and was on its way to performing its duties.[191] The arrival of emissaries from John VIII is an

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[190] Długosz, pp. 301–302. "Segedino discedentibus, litere a Francisco tituli sancti Clementis cardinali, capitaneo classis apostolice, item a ceteris ducibus Burgundie, Venetorum et Ianuensium galearum et navium prefectis afferuntur: exercitum fortem cum classe in stricto esse, et ne Turci in Romaniam ex Nathulia possint traiicere, sufficienter providisse. Rogatur ipsis literis rex, ut virtutem prestet promissis et celerius in Romaniam terrestrem exercitum adducat, facile omnem Europam, si paululum adnitatur, presertim cum vacua sit, Turcorum cesare in Nathulia bellum omnibus copiis cum Tartaris agente, recuperari posse. Imperator preterea Constantinopolitanus Ioannes Paleologi literas Wladislao regi speciali nuncio mittit, maximam spem victorie et liberacionis Euope repromittens, cavendumque a flasis et fictis pacis conclusionibus per Turcum petitis, persuadens..."

[191] It is impossible that the fleet was in fact in the straits at this time. There are several possibilities. Perhaps Długosz was mistaken and the letters were merely announcing the departure of the fleet. In this case it is hard to believe that they were written by Condulmer, since he left on 22 June and the letters would have reached the king prior to August. Perhaps they were letters from the Venetians confirming the departure of the last of the Burgundian vessels on 8 July. This would fit the timetable well, since letters took about 24 days to reach Buda from Venice. These could not have been written by Condulmer who had left several weeks prior unless the cardinal had left a document and ordered it to be dispatched only when the last ships had disembarked. It is also possible that they were dispatched by Condulmer while in port at some point in early July. Whether they spoke of the fleet's departure or progress the letters were

entirely separate item that Długosz prefaces with the word *praeterea* (moreover, furthermore). There is nothing in the text that suggests that these arrived on the same date as Condulmer's letters, but the text would imply that the emperor's messengers arrived not too long after. According to Długosz, it was these two pieces of information that tipped the balance in favor of war.

Engel has pointed out that the Act of Szeged, dated August 4th (see below), was meant to guard against any existing *or future* agreements with the Turks and the Turkish embassy.[192] Indeed, he sees the Act as a safeguard introduced for the purpose of annulling not only the preliminary agreement that had been reached earlier that summer in Edirne, but any agreement to be reached in the future as well. The prologue to the Szeged Manifesto states this quite clearly:

> [And we swear] to do whatever possible by our might and power that the Turks might be expelled this year from Christendom to beyond the sea, notwithstanding any manner of treaties or negotiations whether they be terms or stipulations of truces concluded or to be concluded with the Emperor of the Turks or his nuncios or the aforementioned ambassadors in his name; whether under any wording or oath affirmed or to be affirmed.

Therefore, the treaties the manifesto refers to were those reached in Edirne as well as any ratification that might be accomplished elsewhere in the future. According to Engel, the ratification in fact occurred in Oradea (Varad) on 15 August. He cites two important pieces of evidence to support this. One is a Venetian letter mentioning dispatches sent by Cesarini and Reguardatis on 12 and 14 August which dealt with the peace negotiations. These letters, issued from Oradea, suggest that important talks were still to take place there in the future after the twelfth and the fourteenth.[193] It is worth translating the prologue to this letter in its entirety:

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sufficient to assure the Hungarians that the fleet would be in the straits and perform its duties.

[192] Długosz, p. 300. It is an oft-quoted line, but it is probably the clearest support for Engel's thesis: "et facere quicquid nobis est possibile pro viribus et potencia nostra, ut Turci isto anno expellantur de partibus Christianitatis ultra mare, non obstantibus quibuscumque tractatibus aut practicis seu conclusionibus aut capitulis treugarum factis vel fiendis cum imperatore Turcuorum vel eius nunciis seu ambasiatoribus predictis ipsius nomine, sub quacumque forma verborum, eciam iuramento firmatis vel firmandis."

[193] The letters state (*Fontes rerum polonicarum*, nr. 57, p. 129): "Ser Alvisio Lauredano procuratori Ecclesie Sancti Marci, Capitaneo galearum Summi Pontificis. Certi reddimur, propter literas, quas habemus tam a Reverendissimo domino Cardinale legato Sancti Angeli, quam a circumspecto Secretario nostro Iohanne de Reguardatis, datas Varadini,

> To Mr. Alvisio Loredano, procurator of the Church of Saint Mark, Captain of the Papal galleys.
>
> We have been made aware, through letters from the Reverend Cardinal legate of San Angelo (Cesarini) and our secretary John de Reguardatis, issued in Oradea, in the kingdom of Hungary, on the twelfth and fourteenth of this August, that you (Loredano and his men) would be fully informed by the same lord legate and secretary of certain talks held by the Emperor of the Turks with both the King of Poland and Hungary as well as the Honorable Lord Despot. We do not know if these [talks] will actually take place, since the same Reverend Lord Cardinal of San Angelo (Cesarini) and our secretary wrote that the aforementioned Most Serene King, as well as the barons of Hungary, had promised that they, the aforementioned [talks] notwithstanding, wish to march this year to exterminate the Turks.

The comment "we do not know if these [talks] will actually take place," indicates that some sort of talks had been scheduled or otherwise indicated for a period after 14 August when the letter was written. The Venetian council's own confusion over the matter is apparent, and is further shown in the text following the above passage, wherein the senate, unsure of what has been decided, gives Loredano instructions on how to proceed in either instance, peace or war. The second piece of evidence Engel cites is two entries in the Serbian Annals, which were first indicated by Halecki. They state that a treaty was signed by Branković on 15 August in Oradea,[194] and that Smederevo was handed over exactly eight days later to Branković, the same interval mentioned in Długosz and suggested in the Gazavât.

What were the results of the deliberations among the members of the Hungarian nobility present at Szeged between the first and the fourth of August? Długosz' narrative suggests they opted for peace, but the Act of Szeged clearly indicates a decision to go to war.[195] It is possible that the

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in Regno Hungarie die XII et XIIII Augusti nuper decursi, quod ab ipsis domino legato et secretario informationem plenariam habueritis de nonnullis praticis habitis per Imperatorem Teucrorum, tam cum Serenissimo domino Rege Hungarie et Polonie, quam etiam cum Inclito domino despoto, quas tamen nescimus si locum habiture sint, cum idem Reverendissimus dominus legatus Sancti Angeli, ac secretarius noster nobis scribant, Serenissimum dominum Regem predictum, et Barones Hungarie, predictis non obstantibus, promisisse, velle procedere exercitualiter anno isto ad exterminium Teucrorum."

[194] Engel, p. 246. These same entries were used by Halecki in his attempt to maintain that Branković had signed an entirely separate peace in Oradea.

[195] Rather, Długosz writes that the peace was ratified and then directly afterwards the decision was made to go to war, on account of news received concerning the fleet. Engel and others see this timeline as suspect. But in his portrayal of the discussions of the Hungarian nobility, they seem to opt almost universally for peace.

diet simply decided on a continuation of the Hungarian policy pursued throughout 1444, i.e. to plan for both war and peace with the ultimate decision over which policy to pursue contingent on the performance of the crusaders' allies, particularly Condulmer's fleet. As has been mentioned several times, all parties expected that the fleet, should it actually disembark in sufficient numbers, could easily accomplish its job of barring the straits. This would make the task of the Hungarian army quite simple. It would have to contend with only half the Ottoman forces, since the sultan and the remainder of his stroops would be stranded in Asia. But no one knew if the remainder of the fleet had disembarked or not, if any of the ships were en route or had made it to the straits, or if the sultan had actually crossed over into Asia. Though the crusaders had learned of Condulmer's departure, his eight ships were not sufficient to accomplish the mission. It was expected soon that they would know whether the remaining ships had departed as well.

Yet if the cardinal and the others were intent on waiting for further news before reaching a final decision, what was the purpose of the Szeged Manifesto and why was it sworn upon and signed on August fourth? In regards to the nature of the document, it is important to consider its intended audience—the crusader allies. Cesarini and the king knew that the fleet would eventually hear of the Edirne talks (Cyriac of Ancona had informed the Byzantines within days of their occurrence). They would soon learn that the sultan had sent a peace delegation to Hungary to ratify the treaty. Indeed, as we shall see, the Turks were themselves quite eager to point to the ratified treaty, of which they had a signed and sealed copy, once the allied crusader ships arrived in the straits. In doing so they nearly succeeded in disbanding the fleet, which saw no purpose in fighting if peace existed between Wladislas and the sultan. The Szeged manifesto was meant to prevent precisely this occurence. In the face of an official treaty the manifesto had to be more than a mere memorandum or declaration of intent. It had to be an official document of great weight and import, which demonstrated the will not only of the king and the cardinal but of all parties involved. It had to be an unequivocal, concrete and bold statement from the king and the Hungarian nobility that they were going to lead an expedition against the Turks. It was all these things. But most importantly, it was a disclaimer to whatever evidence, oral or in writing, that might state otherwise. It ultimately served this intended purpose.

In regards to the date of the Szeged manifesto, Łukasiewicz asks an important question. Why was it signed on August fourth, at least a week

before Cesarini and Reguardatis wrote to the Venetians to inform them of the decision to go to war?[196] Shouldn't the date of the manifesto and the date of the letters to Venice coincide? There is simply not enough information to answer this question, but the mere fact of the delay need not force us to assume the Szeged manifesto was falsely dated or even backdated, as Łukasiewicz suggests. One explanation is that the numerous barons assembled at Szeged, particularly the ones who had no intention in participating in the campaign, did not want to stay in the king's company indefinitely while he waited for news on the fleet. They went their respective ways when the king parted from Szeged on 4 or 5 August. In order to have a document that would carry as much weight as a signed treaty, it was important to have this document drawn up and signed by as many of the barons as possible. It may have been agreed that they would sign the document while the diet was in session, but publish the manifesto and send it to the fleet only if positive news arrived confirming the fleet's status. Another explanation is that news of the fleet arrived on the same day as the men were leaving Szeged, i.e. on August fourth. At this point the decision could have been made to both ratify the treaty and to continue on with the campaign, for reasons stated below. Perhaps Cesarini dispatched messengers to the straits with copies of the manifesto on the fourth, immediately after the manifesto was signed. Ratification of the peace treaty was delayed by a week to give them a head start against the Turkish diplomats who were themselves bearing a copy of the treaty to show to the ships in the straits. Perhaps the cardinal did not write to Venice until reaching Oradea because informing the Serenissima was not really that urgent. It was informing the fleet that mattered. These are possible explanations for the delay, the essential point being that the existence of a delay between the signing of the manifesto and the ratification of the treaty is not in itself reason to doubt the date of the manifesto.

Even if Łukasiewicz is right, and the manifesto was backdated; and regardless of whether or not one accepts Engel's theory that the treaty was in fact ratified on 15 August, the essential points about the first two weeks in August 1444 are the following: 1) the decisive factor in the decision to reject the peace offer and go to war was news that the fleet was in place and that Murad and his army were in Asia; 2) The Turks fulfilled their obligations in regard to Smederevo and most of the other fortresses,

[196] We do not know when, precisely, Cesarini dispatched messengers to tell the fleet to ignore any alleged peace agreement with the Turks, only that they informed the Venetians of the situation in writing on 12 and 14 August.

and expected in exchange a ten-year truce; 3) the king, Hunyadi and Branković ratified an advantageous peace treaty with the sultan that they (with the exception of Branković) had no intention of keeping.

The long-awaited news concering the fleet arrived as the men were leaving Szeged and on their way to Oradea.[197] News that the fleet was on its way to the straits and that Murad and the troops of Anatolia would soon be cut off from Europe tipped the scales decisively in favor of war. At some point in the next several days another letter arrived from the Byzantines confirming that Murad was in Asia fighting Ibrahim Bey, expressing concern about a possible peace, and exhorting the king to go to war.[198] The decision to wage the promised campaign was now certain. The important thing was to convey this to the fleet. As Wavrin writes:

> The Cardinal of St. Angele was afraid that the news of the peace might spread to Constantinople and come to the attention of our Christian fleet that was at anchor there. He was afraid that, if they were told about it, they would each return to their own country. He therefore took special care. He found three men who could speak Turkish, dressed them as Turks and sent them to Constantinople by three different routes, so that if one were to be captured, the other would escape and his message would reach its destination. He gave each of them letters (to include the Szeged Manifesto) addressed to the Christians who were guarding the sea, informing them that the King of Hungary would soon be coming to Greece in full strength, and that if, by chance, they heard rumours of a peace between the King of

[197] Since theories regarding the Peace of Szeged/Oradea abound, I will not hesitate to add another. If we accept, as Engel does, that the Szeged manifesto was not issued after the ratification of the treaty but in fact before it, and that it's promulgation was contingent on news concerning the fleet, then we are able to postpone the arrival of this news and the ultimate decision to go to war much further. In other words, it may indeed have been news from Condulmer that the fleet had not merely departed, but was actually in the straits (Długosz, ut supra; Wavrin, Imber's translation, p. 124), which tipped the scales in favor of war. This news could have arrived to Oradea by late August, at which point the king and his men read aloud the letters and informed the others of their decision. This may be the second letter sent by the "Byzantines" which the Gazavât mentions was read aloud and which led to war.

[198] It is not certain whether John VIII or Constantine Dragas was the author of the letter, a distinction which does not seem to me of great import. Both were working for the same goals at this time and pursuing the same anti-Ottoman dynastic policy in concert with one another. Cyriac had written a separate letter to Hunyadi, in which he also mentioned Murad's presence in Asia (Bodnar, p. 51). Cyriac argues that if they conclude the peace, then the sultan will break the truce and march against them as soon as he is finished in Asia.

> Hungary and the Turk, they were to ignore it, because it was nothing but a trick.[199]

These are the messengers referred to when the Venetians informed Loredano in the above-mentioned letter that he would be "fully informed" (*plenariam informationem habueritis*). The question is, why ratify the treaty and risk such potential confusion in the first place? Why not simply reject it and openly declare war against Murad and the Ottomans, rather than ratify the treaty and force themselves to engage in what even many Christian contemporaries condemned as a despicable act of perjury? What could be gained by ratifying a peace treaty weeks before going to war? Branković needed the peace treaty to be signed and ratified in order to maintain his lands in Serbia. His treaty with the sultan was almost certainly a separate document with a legal force of its own. After all, Serbia was not subject to the Hungarian king, a status which the sultan himself wanted to see preserved. Yet Branković's bargain with Murad had been from the beginning that he would receive his despotate and sons in return for bringing the Hungarians to a peace agreement. Branković needed to fulfill these conditions, i.e. the Hungarians needed to sign and ratify the treaty. Should they violate this treaty afterwards would be of no concern to Branković—he would have fulfilled his obligations. Another reason to ratify and then immediately violate the truce was the strategic importance of controlling the stipulated fortresses, particularly those along the Danube.[200] The Ottoman handover removed a serious obstacle to the expedition and allowed it to get underway much earlier than if it had to wait for ships from the crusader fleet in the straits to provide naval support.

In truth, there were very few arguments one could make for *not* ratifying the treaty. The most powerful was that ratifying and then violating the oath would constitute a sinful act of perjury. This uncomfortable but glaring fact would be handled by Cesarini. A former professor in canon law, the cardinal assured the men that as papal legate he could absolve them of any oath they swore to the "infidel," which by its very nature was not binding.[201] Another potential argument against ratification was that it would make it nearly impossible to conclude future agreements with the

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[199] Wavrin (Imber's translation, pp. 124–125). Waleran de Wavrin, the source of the chronicle, eventually met one of these messengers personally who imparted the information.

[200] See note above.

[201] Długosz, p. 306.

Turks. But in the expectation of victory, no one thought there would be a need for future treaties or diplomatic negotiations. Another argument is that the allies would hear of the ratification and abandon their operations. As we have seen, provisions had already been made to avoid this potential problem.

As Engel rather convincingly argues (see above) the men traveled with Baltaoğlu to Oradea in order to ratify the treaty there. After the document was sworn upon to the satisfaction of the Turks (who in their own land accepted that oaths made by Christians in accordance with their own law were legally binding), the Turks left in order to quickly deliver the fortresses as had been agreed. Smederevo was handed over within eight days, and the majority of the other fortresses were handed over soon afterwards.[202] After the Turks' departure little time was wasted. Wladislas promulgated his summons to war and final preparations for the campaign were begun.

The Poles had been expecting Wladislas to return to Poland in late August, and the king seems to have informed them of this at some point during the peace negotiations with the Turks.[203] The king had even appointed the place and time of the meeting, at Piotrkow at the end of August, and stated his intention to attend personally.[204] With events in Hungary demanding his presence—among them, if Engel is to be believed, the ongoing negotiations with the Turks—the king sent John Gruszczyński as an envoy in his stead. When it was discovered that the king would not attend in person, the frustrated and disappointed nobility wrote a long letter urging Wladislas to accept the Ottoman treaty. They began by stating the condition of Poland when Wladislas inherited the throne, and how they themselves had urged him to take on the Hungarian throne, not for the sake of ambition or glory, "but so that the catholic faith, once oppressed by barbaric cruelty, might be assisted and protected

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[202] Długosz argues that the Christians were justified in going to war, since all of the fortresses were not handed over within the alloted time period, i.e. they were handed over in twenty days instead of eight. He may be basing his chronology off of his belief that the peace was signed on the second, and not the fifteenth. If one adheres to Engel's theory that the peace was ratified in Oradea on the fifteenth, then the main forts concerned, Golubac and Smederevo, were handed over within the eight days. Wladislas made a similar claim in his letter to the Poles informing them of his decision to go to war. (Kwiatkowski, "Urzędnicy Kancelaryjni etc. Władysława III," *Rozprawy i sprawozdania z posiedzenia wydziału historyczno-filozoficznego Akademii Umiejętności* XVII (1884): 129–130.

[203] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 1, pp. 140–144.

[204] Dąbrowski, p. 158.

by your majesty's arm and the conjoining of the kingdoms, and that your majesty might take up its defense."[205] God has assisted in this endeavor, and "the barbarian furor has ceased." The Turks, once the scourge of Hungary, have been so broken that they have sent envoys with ample gifts and offering peace in order to placate the king.[206] They urged Wladislas to accept the highly advantageous peace, not only for the sake of Hungary but for the sake of Poland as well. They enumerated the various problems facing the kingdom—among them Tartar raids and the strife between the Dukes of Mazowsze and Lithuania. They pointed out that Wladislas had remained in Hungary a long time, and that the Poles had provided already a good deal of assistance to that kingdom in helping it to solve its own problems. The Hungarians were now obligated to allow Wladislas to return to Poland.

This letter arrived after the decision to go to war had been made. It was clear from the letter's message and tone that there would be minimal assistance from Poland in the event of war. Given the lack of enthusiasm from the Hungarian nobility, many of whom had likewise encouraged the king to accept the peace, the burden of war would instead rest primarily on the shoulders of the king, Hunyadi, and several other magnates. Some of their names are listed on the Szeged Manifesto itself: the Bishop of Eger Simon Rozgony, the Bishop of Oradea John de Dominis, the nominated Bishop of Bosnia Raphael Székcsö and of course John Hunyadi.[207] Other barons who eventually took part were Stephen Batory, John Orszag, Frank Thalloci, Henry Thomassi and Wladislas Banffi de Losoncs. There were also those Poles who comprised the king's personal bodyguard and a handful of Polish nobles, among them Nicholas Lasocki and John Koniecpolski, who had been at the king's side throughout his time in Hungary.[208]

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[205] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 1, p. 141.

[206] Ibid.: "missis nuntiis notabilibus et muneribus amplissimis pacem quam servare numquam etiam rogatum consueverat, rogaverit, temporalem vel perpetuam prout vestrae placeret maiestati." This passage, as well as their mention of letters from the king stating the terms of the peace, would seem to suggest that Wladislas had written a letter to the Poles upon the embassy's arrival.

[207] Długosz (p. 308) and Engel suggest that Hunyadi was bribed with an offer of the kingdom of Bulgaria as incentive to join in the campaign and go against his previous agreement with Branković to work for a peace agreement. Perhaps this is true, but as Dąbrowski points out there could have been any number of motivations for the voivode's decision, not the least of which was a belief that he stood to earn for himself a great deal of glory and wealth, having thus far met almost entirely with success against the Turks.

[208] Zdisław Pentek, "Polscy uczestnicy wyprawy Warneńskiej," in *Balcanica Posnaniensa* VIII (1997): 103–108. This article lists by name 102 Polish participants. The author concludes that "the number of soldiers in the Polish Army which was present in Hungary

A number of other barons, though they ratified the manifesto and the king's intent to go to war, stated clearly that they would remain in the kingdom and not take part in the campaign personally.[209]

Operations Begin

After leaving Tenedos Wavrin and his ships headed for the Dardanelles. Familiar with tales of the Trojan War, the Burgundian was unable to keep himself from landing at the site where Agamemnon had supposedly beached his own ships a millenium and a half earlier. The move was symbolic. Many in the West, particularly those familiar with classical literature, used the term *Teucer* to describe the Turks rather than the more traditional *Turcus*. *Teucer* was a name used in the Iliad to describe the Trojans, and for many this was evidence of the origins of the Turks, who were viewed as the descendants of King Priam's Trojans, an idea reinforced no doubt by their presence on the Anatolian peninsula. Wavrin saw himself and his soldiers as the new Hellenes, obliged to once again wage war upon the Trojan enemy. He and a large landing party disembarked from their ships at the town of Dardanelle (Çanakkale), where they skirmished with a contingent of Turkish foot soldiers and cavalry.[210] It was the first engagement of the crusade of 1444.

The day after this skirmish the Burgundians sailed for Gallipoli, which they reached four days later. It was now likely mid-August. Across from Gallipoli, in the port of Lapseki, they finally met up with Cardinal Condulmer and the remainder of the fleet. Despite the cardinal's extreme illness he and Wavrin decided to take two galleys each and head to Constantinople to discuss strategy with the Byzantines, leaving the rest of the

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and which later made its way to the battlefield of Varna is estimated at around five to six thousand persons." The author gives almost no evidence to support this large number. Most authors, including Dąbrowski, maintain that Polish participation in the battle was extremely limited, likely numbering well under a thousand men.

[209] Dąbrowski maintains that the men not personally taking part in the campaign comprised the peace party. But this is a strong assumption for which there is no explicit evidence. Indeed, it is hard to believe that Simon Rozgony, who was taking part in the campaign, and his brother George, who was not, could be politically opposed to one another. The list, both participants and non-participants, is instead characterized by the fact that it is comprised of Wladislas' staunchest supporters. These may have been the only ones he trusted to ratify the act and to maintain its secrecy in the face of the Turkish envoys.

[210] The following paragraph is taken from Wavrin (Imber's translation, pp. 122–123). For more details see chapter four.

ships to watch over the straits. While in Constantinople they held an audience with John VIII and plans were made for how to divide up the fleet and prevent Murad's crossing. It was decided that the papal galleys and those of Venice, together with two ships from the Duke of Burgundy, would keep guard at the Straits of Gallipoli. It was expected that Murad would cross there, since both shores were firmly under Turkish control and the greater length of the straits gave the Turks more options. Wavrin, with only two Burgundian ships and the two Ragusan vessels, assumed his post in the Bosphorus.

Just after the navies had taken up their respective positions the Turks, noticing the war vessels in the straits, signalled to Wavrin for an audience. He at first refused suspecting some treachery on the part of the Turks, but the captain of the Ragusan ships prevailed upon him and he granted the Turks an audience. The Ottomans came aboard and informed the captains that a treaty had been signed with the King of Hungary. They informed the incredulous captains that they could fetch the treaty bearing Wladislas' seal and prove it. They were told to do so. When they returned, the Ragusan captain examined the document carefully and determined that it was indeed a peace treaty between the "King of Hungary and the Grand Turk." He suggested to Wavrin that there was no reason to conduct further operations.[211] Wavrin left for Constantinople to inform the emperor and the cardinal of the treaty, but they had already been shown the document by the Turks. According to Wavrin, Condulmer was

> utterly bewildered by the news of the peace. However, when they were all there together, one of the three messengers arrived from Hungary and presented his letters from the Cardinal of St. Angele. After offering salutations, the letters stated, in brief, that if they heard any news of a peace between the Grand Turk and the King of Hungary, they should not believe a word of it. Rather, in October, the King of Hungary would set out with a great army. He would cross the Danube into Greece, which he would reconquer. Meanwhile they were to keep a close and watchful guard on the straits to keep the Turks from crossing. Everyone was delighted to hear this news, because previously they had not known what to do—whether to stay or whether to leave—, but now the content of the letters gave them assurance.[212]

[211] Wavrin (Imber's translation), p. 125.
[212] Ibid., p. 126.

These were the messengers Cesarini had dispatched in August with copies of the Szeged Manifesto. They arrived just in time. The ships, now certain of their mission, took up their respective positions and kept a watchful eye on the straits, waiting for word that the Hungarians had begun their invasion in the north.

According to Długosz,[213] the crusader army which assembled in the first half of September was much smaller than expected. The morale of the troops was significantly lower than it had been a year prior, and the available resources were less. Lasocki was forced to send away a number of Polish "volunteers" whose expectations for compensation were too high.[214] An attempt was made to hire a less expensive group of 2,000 Polish mercenaries but the group did not arrive in time to join the expedition.[215] There were a number of crusader volunteers of various nationalities which remained, as before, under the command of Cardinal Cesarini. Despite the pope's diplomatic endeavors no help came from France, England, Germany or even Aragon.

Attempts were made to incite revolt among the Balkan populations. While Hungarian preparations for the expedition were coming to a close Eugene IV wrote a letter in early September exhorting the Balkan peoples to rise up against the Turks.[216] He mentioned both the crusader fleet under Condulmer and the land expedition under Cardinal Cesarini. On September 24th, having received news from the Hungarian army that the crusaders would soon reach Rumelia, letters were sent out from Ragusa addressed to the Lords of Albania and the Morea encouraging them to fight alongside.[217] It was hoped that as the crusaders marched into the Balkans the peoples there would join them en masse and support them logistically.[218] There is some evidence of this support, particularly early on in the campaign.[219]

Little help came from the Balkan rulers themselves. Branković, having achieved all he desired from the last campaign, refused to support the

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213 Długosz, p. 311.

214 Ibid., p. 310.

215 Dąbrowski, p. 164.

216 *Epistolae pontificae*, nr. 277, pp. 95–96.

217 Krekić, *Dubrovnik* (*Ragusa*), nr. 1069, p. 342.

218 This is evident in Hunyadi's letter to the Pope from 11 May 1445, in which he complains that the promised support from the Byzantines, Wallachians, Moldavians and Bulgarians never materialized. (F. Pall, "Skanderbeg et Janco," p. 106, note 7).

219 See below. Also see Cvetkova, p. 327. She cites several sources which indicate Bulgarian assistance in 1444.

1444 expedition, and warned the king that it was folly to go forward.[220] The Albanians, though continuing to fight the Turks in their own country, did not have the means at this point to join up with Hunyadi and his troops.[221] The only foreign contribution to the land expedition of significance came from Wallachia. Vlad Dracul offered 4,000 of his own cavalryman commanded by his son, the current voivode, Mircea II. In doing so Vlad proved himself willing to jettison his relations with the Porte to support the anti-Ottoman crusade.

Andreas de Pallatio,[222] who was a personal participant and whose account is the single most important western source for the expedition, gives us rather reliable numbers for the army. The king's force, he tells us, numbered 16,000 men. They were accompanied by 2,000 wagons,[223] with a low percentage of them being actual war wagons. Pallatio complains that they were not laden with necessities so much as fineries. It is likely that the large number of wagons were a means to avoid the catastrophic retreat and starvation the army had faced the year before. Hunyadi was once again appointed commander of the force, with the title of *supremus capitaneus armorum et dux militiae exercitus christianissimi regis Hungariae*.[224]

Given meager numbers and the lack of promised military support from abroad, why did the king and Hunyadi continue with the expedition? The answer is the fleet. By early to mid-September news would have reached the king that Condulmer and Wavrin were in place and that Murad was still in Asia. They were also informed of Murad's abdication and led to believe that the new sultan, Mehmed, was no equal to his father. Though the army was smaller than that of the previous year, they were relatively sure that they could defeat a divided Ottoman force weakened by trouble on several fronts.

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220 Chalkokondyles, p. 326.

221 The historian Barletius' account, in which Branković blocked the troops, is mostly recognized as fictitious. See Pall, "Skanderbeg et Janco," pp. 105–106.

222 Pallatio, p. 461.

223 That the crusaders had 2,000 wagons at the battle of Varna is also mentioned by the Turkish writer Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 607).

224 Katona, p. 296.

The First Weeks of the Campaign

Murad's decision to abdicate the throne to his son Mehmet proved problematic. Within the three or so months of his reign Edirne would witness the release of the pretender Orhan by the Byzantines, a religious uprising, a destructive fire, the suppression of a major heresy and of course the invasion of the Hungarians. Already in June Cyriac of Ancona described the sense of apprehension in the capital: "Frightened with a mighty fear, as you will learn in detail from your [representatives], they spend every day repairing their walls, fortifying their towers with ramparts of wood, and preparing their army for retreat rather than battle."[225] This apprehension continued to increase as news arrived that the Hungarians were preparing a large army to invade Rumelia.[226] Beheim tells us that upon hearing of the Hungarian plans a number of city officials and merchants, "terrifed and fearful," fled from Edirne and Gallipoli and headed to Bursa, the Ottoman capital of Asia.[227] Other events added to this tension. No sooner had the crisis with Ibrahim Bey been averted and Mehmet placed on the throne than, as described above, the Byzantines released the pretender Orhan. This political crisis was followed by a religious crisis. At the Ottoman court in 1444 there was a preacher of the Hurufi sect who had won the ear and affection of the young Sultan Mehmet.[228] The preacher's teachings included criticisms of Islam and incorporated a number of points of Christian theology. The preacher had ingratiated himself to the sultan to such an extent that even Halil Pasha was afraid to confront and remove him. Halil engaged the help of the Kazasker Mullah Husrev. Upon hearing the preacher's heresies one day at Halil Pasha's home, the enraged mullah chased him down and seized him before he could reach the safety of the palace. After delivering a sermon condemning the man and his heresy, Husrev had the man and his sons dragged out into the courtyard of the newly-built Üç Şerefli Mosque and publicly burnt. His numerous followers in the city were likewise pursued and punished. To add to all the woes facing the city, a massive fire broke out on September 22nd, the

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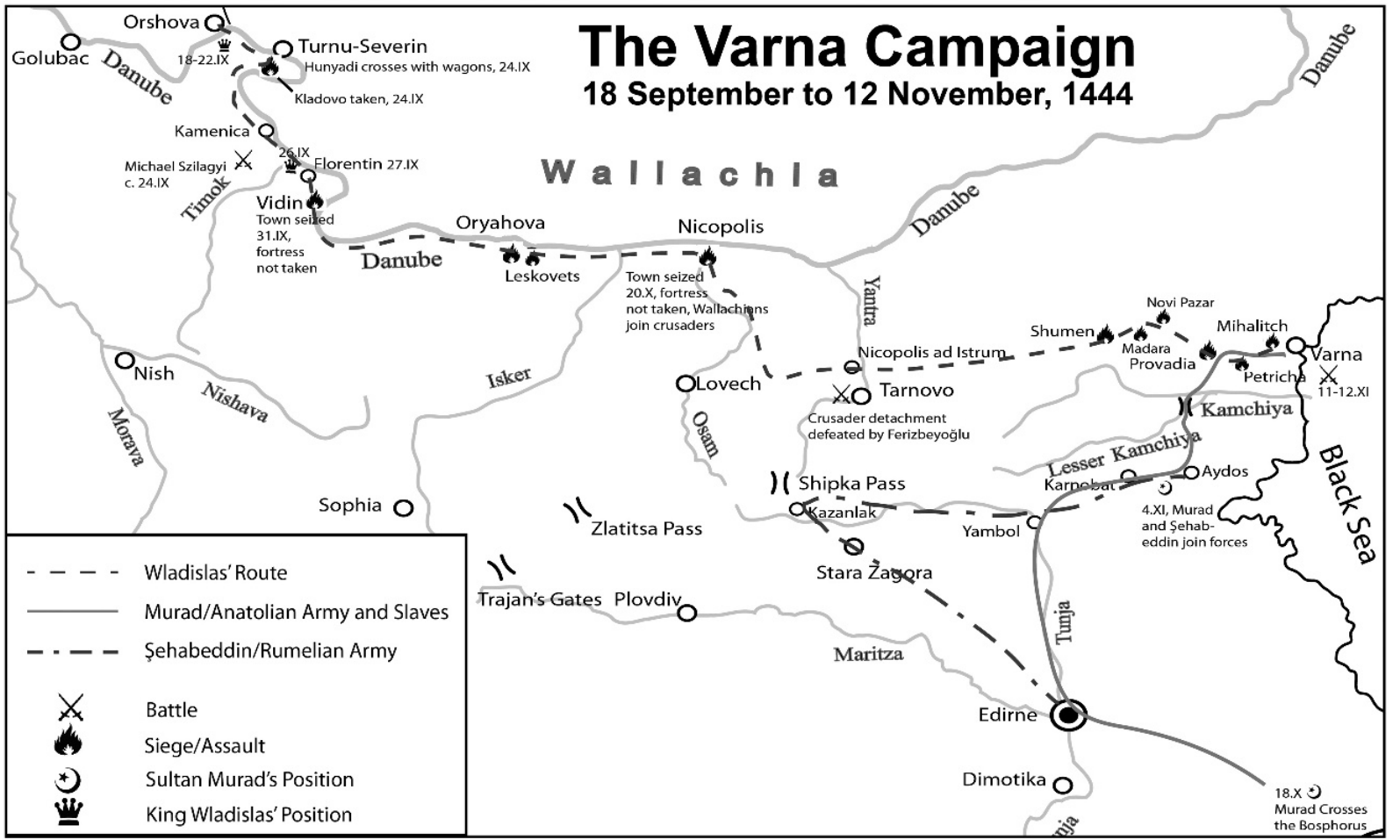
225 Bodnar, nr. 11, pp. 51–52.

226 It was not news of the crossing of the Danube, but of the preparations to do so that had an effect in Edirne, as related by the *Cronaca Zancaruola* (passage found in Babinger, "Von Amurath zu Amurath," p. 244): "De Ongaria si sente chel se apparechiva grandissima quanttita de zente per voler andar ad unirse con il campo de christiani et per questa cason Turchi sono molto sbigotiti."

227 Beheim, lines 262–270 (Imber's translation, p. 171; *Die Gedichte*, p. 336).

228 See Babinger, "Von Amurath zu Amurath," pp. 245–247.



Map 6. The Varna campaign.

same day the crusader army crossed the Danube. It claimed the Genoese marketplace in Edirne as well as 2007 homes.[229]

From various muster points throughout the kingdom the crusader army set out along a route almost identical to that of Murad's army in 1438. Having reached the designated assembly point at Orshova they began to cross the Danube on 18 September. The Turks garrisoned in the fortress of Tekii opposite Orshova resisted the crossing as best they could, but with naval support the Hungarians succeeded in subduing the fortress and its garrison.[230] The numerous wagons accompanying the army did not cross at Orshova but were dispatched along the left bank of the river towards Turnu Severin, where they might more easily be brought across with the Hungarians controlling both sides of the river.

The crossing at Orshova was complete by 22 September, and the army headed east along the Danube. They marched a day or two to a place across from Turnu Severin, where they waited for the wagons to be ferried across. Hunyadi sent Michael Szilágyi,[231] his *familiaris* and right-hand man, to forage ahead for supplies and scout out enemy resistance. He plundered the region around the Timok river, seizing food and equipment for the army. A number of the peasants on the left bank of the Timok, "when they witnessed all this, offered their allegiance."[232] They attacked the camp of the local sanjak bey and marcher lord, Kümülüoğlu,[233] seizing his horsetail standards and plundering his tents. Kümülüoğlu was forced to flee to Vratsa where he met up with Mehmet Ferizbeyoğlu, the marcher lord of Nicopolis. The two combined forces. Gathering their retinues and akinji raiders, they headed after the king and trailed his army, informing the Porte as frequently and accurately as possible of the crusaders' plans and route.

Once the Hungarians' wagons had been transported across the river the army laid siege to the nearest town, possibly Kladovo. That same day

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[229] Babinger, p. 248. Babinger associates this entry in the *Cronaca Zancaruola* with a revolt of the janissaries reported by other Ottoman sources. Halil İnalcik (Fatih Devri, pp. 93–95) later argued convincingly that this uprising did not take place until 1446.

[230] Dąbrowski, p. 172. Jorga, *Notes et extraits*, vol. III, pp. 192–193.

[231] Mention of this is found only in the Gazavât, p. 41 (Imber's translation, p. 78). Szilágyi, a noblemen originally from Temesh, was one of the most important persons in Hunyadi's familia. His sister, Elisabeth, was Hunyadi's wife. He was commander of Belgrade fortress during the famous siege in 1456. In 1460 he was taken prisoner by the Turks, and executed by Mehmet II in 1461 in Constantinople.

[232] Ibid. Beheim, lines 321–322, also writes that "the common people were all Christians. They surrendered, and nothing was done to them."

[233] For more on this person see İnalcik's footnote in the Gazavât, p. 105.

they took the city by storm and killed the Turks stationed there, reducing the town completely.[234] The crusaders continued along the south bank of the Danube, and after four days they reached Florentin.[235] Two days later, on 29 September, they arrived at Ottoman-controlled Vidin. They succeeded in taking the town after two days and had the Turkish administrators massacred.[236] Seizing the city's fortress proved more difficult. Having failed in[237] an initial assault, Wladislas decided to proceed to Edirne as swiftly as possible rather than waste time subjugating the various fortresses along the way. Pallatio tells us that one of the main reasons for this decision was a papal request that the men join up with the fleet in the straits as soon as possible. Pallatio makes mention of another, equally important strategic decision made at Vidin. Several persons in the army thought it better to turn south from Vidin and follow a narrower and more arduous mountain road leading directly to Edirne. Following this route, it was claimed, they could reach Edirne in only fifteen days.[238] According to Pallatio the king and Hunyadi declined this route, since it would have proven difficult for the wagons. True as this may be, they were motivated at least in part by a wish to avoid the harrowing retreat they had experienced the year before. Despite the pope's request, they also wanted confirmation that the fleet was in place and performing its mission before committing themselves to crossing the mountains. The Danube route was also easier in terms of supply, and it allowed the army an avenue of retreat should they be forced to withdraw.

Leaving Vidin the crusaders continued east along the river, seizing and plundering Oryahovo, as well as its neighboring town of Leskovets.[239] On

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[234] Beheim (Imber's translation, p. 172). The author does not name the city, but the text suggests that it was across from Turnu Severin where the army was waiting for the carts. According to Beheim, the city was taken on the "first day" of the campaign, i.e. September 24th.

[235] 27 September. These dates are taken from Pallatio's chronicle (*Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, pp. 455–469). He gives dates ordinally by the number of days into the expedition, for example "*quarta die Florentinum et sexta Bdynium comperimus*." This means one must include the 24th in reckoning the dates. The fourth day was therefore 27 September and the sixth day 29 September. The date of 24 September as the initial date and not 22 September is based on several factors. (See Dąbrowski, p. 173, footnote 2).

[236] Beheim, lines 311–320 (Imber's translation, p. 172).

[237] Gazavât, pp. 41–42 (Imber's translation, pp. 78–79).

[238] Pallatio, p. 461.

[239] Beheim, Lines 384–390 (*Die Gedichte*, p. 339; Imber's translation, p. 173) states that Oryahovo was seized after Nicopolis, but this makes no sense geographically. The Gazavât (p. 45; Imber's translation, p. 81) makes it clear that they marched on Oryahovo

the 16th of October the king and his army drew near to the city of Nicopolis, where they arrived on 19 October. The next day they succeeded in seizing the poorly defended lower portion of the town. The "Greek" inhabitants, in a show of solidarity, "jumped over the wall and joined the Hungarians." The numerous Turkish inhabitants, however, sought refuge in the citadel, where the garrison captain, Mehmet Kapudanoğlu,[240] organized them into a defensive force. Wladislas razed the lower portion of the city to the ground.[241] The citadel proved more problematic. Kapudanoğlu concocted a stratagem to inflict maximum casualties on the enemy.[242] He opened the gates of the fortress and made it appear deserted. He then set a sizeable contingent of cavalry in the open field. In typical Ottoman fashion these horsemen feigned retreat and lured a large contingent of the Hungarians to within firing range of the castle walls, which the crusaders had presumed deserted. When they reached the fortress the Turkish garrison suddenly appeared and rained down arrows and gunfire on the assaulting enemy. Soon after they sallied forth to finish them off. Two banners and 200 prisoners were seized from among the routed Hungarian troops. The next day a second assault was made from another side, but this too failed. The trophies of war seized by the Turkish

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and then its neighboring town of Leskovets (not Lovech, as reported in Imber, p. 81) soon after leaving Vidin.

[240] Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 608) says that there were 1,000 cavalry and 2,000 azabs in Nicopolis fortress along with 30 cannon. These numbers are almost certainly inflated, but they convey the important fact that there were a large number of troops stationed in the castle. These may have been garrisoned there in such high numbers due to the expectation that the Hungarians would cross there.

[241] Sroka, "Itinerarium," p. 166. A document was addressed by Wladislas on this date stating: "in descensu nostro exercituali prope Nicopolin in Bulgaria." A Hungarian document, mentioned both in Dąbrowski (p. 174) and Sroka's "Itinerarium" (p. 166) state that the king was near Nicopolis on 16 October. Pallatio writes that the town was reached on the 26th day of the march, or 19 October. Beheim, lines 361–380 (Imber's translation, p. 173; *Die Gedichte*, p. 339) writes that the city was taken on the "fifth day." This ordinal reference does not suggest the fifth day of the siege, but rather the day after their arrival before the city, which took place on the "fourth day" of marching. This is perhaps clearer in the original German: "Und an dem virden tag vil drat / kamen sy für ain mechtig stat, / Schiltern hort man sy nennen / … / Am funfften tag da wart dy stat gewunnen und verprennet glat / und gancz geprachen nider."

[242] According to the Gazavât, pp. 45–46 (Imber's translation, pp. 81–82) Mehmet Ferizbeyoğlu managed the defense. Yet both Kashifi and Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 608) state that it was Mehmet Kapudanoğlu. This makes more sense given that Mehmet Ferizbeyoğlu had been trailing in pursuit of the King's army and would have been more likely to engage the Hungarians in the field than to garrison a castle, particularly without the crusaders noticing. The Gazavât mentions the ambush, but Zaifi's account contains more details.

garrison were sent to Edirne where the Porte received them with great pleasure.

The army seems to have tarried before Nicopolis for several days, during which time Vlad Dracul arrived at their camp.[243] A war council was held in his presence to determine the army's next step. According to Długosz, Vlad attempted to dissuade the Hungarians from continuing, citing the meagre size of the crusader army in comparison with the Ottomans. The majority of the Hungarian nobles likewise favored a return to the kingdom. Part of the reason for these deliberations may have been the news that the Ottomans had already begun to block the passes leading south.[244] Another consideration was certainly the late season, and a wish to avoid a withdrawal under conditions similar to those of the Long March. These considerations were dispelled when news reached the crusaders that the papal fleet was still in the straits and had thus far succeeded in blockading Murad in Asia and preventing his troops crossing into Europe.[245] As far as they could tell the fleet was successful in its mission and intent on performing it further. They were now obliged to perform theirs. Unable to dissuade the Hungarians Vlad Dracul generously offered 4,000 Wallachian cavalry under the command of his son, Mircea.[246] He promised to offer no solace to the enemy, and that his subjects would grant assistance to the Hungarians as far as possible. In this spirit he ordered two men mounted on the swiftest of horses to accompany Wladislas. Vlad warned him to never let these men leave his side. Well-acquainted with the land, they could serve as guides and would bring the king to safety in time of need.[247]

Armed with the information that the ships were in place and that Murad was stranded in Asia, the crusaders began immediately to move

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[243] Beheim, Lines 321–330 (*Die Gedichte*, pp. 337–338; Imber's translation, p. 172) says that Vlad joined the army at Vidin. Pallatio (p.461) and Długosz (pp. 313–314) say that Vlad arrived at Nicopolis, which would make more sense geographically. Pallatio makes mention of Murad's treaty with the sultan.

[244] Gazavât, p. 46 (Imber's translation, p. 82). This is the same passage as mentioned above. It does not state whether or not the Ottomans had already blocked certain passes or not, only that they wished to know the Christian route so they could better accomplish this task. One would assume that the contingents meant to perform these duties were already in place and busy executing their orders.

[245] Długosz, p. 314. Beheim, lines 380–383. (Imber's translation, p. 173; *Die Gedichte*, p. 339).

[246] This was almost certainly Mircea II. His other sons Radu and Vlad the Impaler were still being held as hostages at the Ottoman court.

[247] Długosz, p. 314.

south from Nicopolis along the Osam river. Their plan was to cross through the Balkans via the Shipka Pass following the road south to Stara Zagora.[248] They had no way of knowing that the Ottomans were already moving to block this passage, and that Murad himself had several days prior succeeded in crossing the straits and was already on his way towards Edirne.

The Crossing of the Straits

The tension in the Ottoman capital heightened with news that the Hungarians had crossed into Rumelia and were marching on the city.[249] Murad's son Mehmet, now the official sultan, ordered Mahmud Pasha Kassaboğlu[250] to ride with letters to Murad and convince him by any means to return to Edirne. Murad was obstinate, insisting that he had abdicated the throne and that the crisis was now his son's to handle. According to Sadeddin, Mehmet's letter to his father contained the following oft-quoted argument: "If the Imperial power and sultanate belong to you, you are obliged to defend them against the enemy. Otherwise, if these things now belong to me, then it is necessary to obey the sultan."[251]

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[248] The Gazavât (p. 45; Imber's translation, p. 82) mentions that the crusaders marched along the Osam River, which joins the Danube a few kilometers west of Nicopolis. This river heads due south, though the crusaders must have headed east at some point as well, perhaps along the Ister river or even cutting across earlier. Dąbrowski (p. 174, note 6) mentions an old road to the Black Sea that indeed traversed this route. The Gazavât also tells us that the king and his army had marched close to Tarnovo (Gazavât, p. 46; Imber's translation, p. 82) before they sent a contingent ahead to seize this fortress. This makes it very difficult to accept the proposed route of some historians (e.g. Cvetkova, p. 330), who maintain that the crusaders marched to Shistovo, then Razgrad and from there to Novi Pazar. Cvetkova espouses the argument that the ruins seen by Pallatio were not those at Nikup (Nicopolis ad Istrum) but at Arbitrus. Dąbrowski had earlier demonstrated the difficulty of accepting Cvetkova's proposed route, even prior to the discovery of the Gazavât. The Gazavât mentions the army's movement along the Osam after departing Nicopolis, the army's presence in the vicinity of Tarnovo and the intentions of the crusaders to cross via the Shipka pass, providing more than enough evidence to support Dąbrowski's proposal. The crusaders therefore continued south, then east. Finding the Shipka pass blocked, they moved eastward along the road to the Black Sea hoping to cross elsewhere.

[249] Gazavât, p. 42 (Imber's translation, p. 79).

[250] Oruç Bey (p. 67) says that a certain Ali Cebe was sent to convince Murad to return. According to the Gazavât Mahmud Pasha had also been sent to fetch Murad earlier during the crisis caused by the false Orhan (see above). It is quite possible that he was only dispatched once, but that the Gazavât reports this event in two different contexts.

[251] The above translation is a rather loose one. See Sadeddin, p. 217.

These arguments and the pleading of Mahmud eventually prevailed. Murad signed letters announcing his intent to return to the capital. He gathered up his men and set out for the straits.

In Edirne preparations were being made for a crusader assault.[252] The divan consulted an experienced veteran from among the Slaves of the Porte, a certain Çavuş Bey, to advise on the city's defenses. According to him it was necessary to begin construction at once on a water-filled moat to surround the city. The people from the countryside should be brought inside and enough food should be stored to feed them. While these preparations were being made Halil Pasha and Şehabeddin surreptitiously moved themselves and their belongings outside of the city to the nearby fortress of Dimetoka. This led to complaints from the city's residents:

> The people of Edirne began to mutter. They gathered around the Pashas and said: "Why are you doing this? What do you think you are doing, removing your property and provisions to Dimetoka? What can we poor folk do? Where can we go?" At this the Pashas replied to the people: "We are men of affairs. We have removed some of our property and provisions, because nobody knows what is going to happen, and we may well need an outer treasury. You are slaves and subjects and residents in this city, and what you need to do is to bring in all your property and provisions from outside and fight manfully for the religion of Islam."[253]

The Pashas argued that their own responsibilities required them to come and go and to have access to supplies. Should the city be sealed off this would no longer be possible. As the Gazavât wryly remarks: "However, this was not the Pashas' real intention in removing their property and provisions. They had removed them simply so that they would not be there if the infidels captured the citadel." Whatever their intention in moving to Dimetoka, the passage is a striking example of the panic and despair gripping the city in the autumn of 1444.

The prisoners seized by Ferizbeyoğlu at Nicopolis and sent to the sultan confirmed that the crusaders intended to march on Edirne. Çavuş Bey advised sending men forward to block off the passes leading to the plain, while the sultan and the pashas assembled the forces of Rumelia and Asia. Mehmet had orders drawn up and distributed to the kadis of every district stating that they should mobilize all members of the military caste, regardless of rank or position, immediately and "without delaying for a single day or hour." The kadis were also ordered to "have great trees

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[252] Gazavât, pp. 43–44 (Imber's translation, pp. 79–80).
[253] Ibid.

felled and block each and every defile along the path of the infidels who are as low as the dust."[254] Sultan Mehmet's orders amounted to a general mobilization, similar to the one of 1443. Indeed the Ottomans were faced with a very similar situation. Though Mehmet Ferizbeyoğlu and his men were in pursuit and monitoring the crusader army, his force was too small to fully engage. The Ottomans needed time to mobilize. While the army of Rumelia was quickly gathering, it was not certain when, or even if (on account of the blockade), Murad would arrive with the army of Asia and his slave troops. The best the Ottomans could do was block the passes and attempt to prevent the crusaders' entry into the plain of Edirne. This strategy, which had ultimately succeeded in 1443, might buy enough time to allow the forces of the empire to come together and mount a counter-offensive.

The most important variable in the victory equation was whether or not Murad would succeed in crossing from Asia into Europe. Having reconnoitred the situation in the straits Murad rejected the plan to cross at Gallipoli. He would instead cross over at the narrowest point in the Bosphorus. Most sources base his decision on the greater number of crusader ships in the Dardanelles versus the Bosphorous (sixteen and four respectively). Yet there were other advantages to crossing there, namely the ability to use cannon to cover the transport vessels and the available support of the Genoese. The latter had their merchant colony in nearby Pera (Galata), and could help the sultan ferry his men across. Indeed, Wavrin tells us that it was the Genoese themselves who advised the sultan to cross at this point.[255] In any case Mahmud Kassaboğlu traveled back to the Porte with letters ordering Halil Pasha to send a force to Göksü, telling him to "guard both the near and far shore with cannon, so that the cannon on either side should be able to kiss each other."[256] It was here, on the Anatolian side, that Bayezid had erected the so-called Anadolu Hisarı[257] in 1394 in preparations for his failed siege of Constantinople. Mehmet II later constructed the Rumeli Hisarı across from it on the European side just prior to his successful siege of the city in 1453. The short distance between the two shores (550 meters) and the available heights left both banks in range of Ottoman cannon from the opposing

254 Ibid.
255 Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 128).
256 Gazavât, p. 47 (Imber's translation, p. 83).
257 At the time, before the construction of the Rumeli Hisarı, it was simply known as the "new castle" or Yenihisar.

side.[258] This cannon, as Wavrin tells us, was supplied by the Genoese of Pera.[259] It proved essential in what was to follow.

Wavrin received a warning from these same Genoese that Murad was aware of the crusader invasion and he was intending to cross with his men at the Bosphorus.[260]

> They also heard that the Genoese were intending to do all they could to help the Turks. As you will hear, this turned out to be true because, making a pretence of going fishing, the Genoese delivered two large boats to the Turks, who were in a newly-built castle (Anadolu Hisarı) near to the straits, on a river (Göksü) which flows down there. The Lord of Wavrin and the Hungarians (Ragusans) paid no attention to this, since the Genoese pretended to be their friends. As they returned from Turkey to Constantinople, passing through the fleet, they told only lies and falsehoods. Meanwhile, some Venetians crossed to Turkey, pretending to be Genoese. On their return, they reported that at the New Castle (Anadolu Hisarı), they had seen twenty or more large boats, with well-greased hulls and furnished with oars and other equipment. The Genoese had delivered the boats to the Turks.

They also leared that Murad had sent for Halil Pasha, who was on his way with a large force and a significant number of artillery which they would set up across from the Anadolu Hisarı. Wavrin held a council and he and the others realized it would be impossible to bar the straits if the Turks set up artillery on both sides. The ships would be safest mid-stream, but this position would force them to constantly row against the strong current in the Bosphorus, an effort which could not be maintained indefinitely. They sent Gauvain Quieret and John Bayart to insist that the Emperor send an army to prevent Halil's arrival and the emplacement of Ottoman cannon. Otherwise, their efforts were doomed to fail. John VIII argued that his land forces were too meager to contest Halil Pasha's men. An overland assault on the Ottoman troops would only expose the city to an attack, and if Constantinople should fall there would be no chance of success for the crusade. The emperor did, however, agree to send two galleys to the crusader's assistance once Halil Pasha arrived.

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[258] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 127) noted this as well, "[The Ottomans] noticed that the sea there was so narrow that a culverin could fire from one side to the other, that is from Turkey to Greece or from Greece to Turkey."

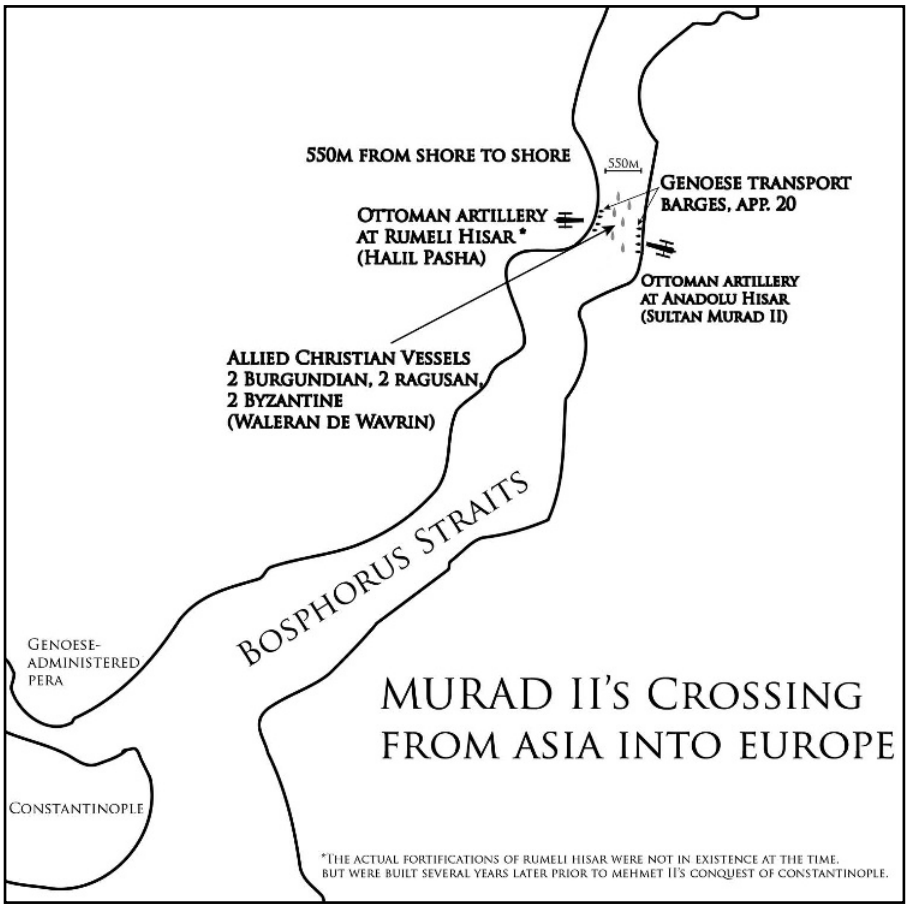
[259] Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 128).

[260] Waleran de Wavrin's account of events (Imber's translation, pp. 125–129), which was recorded by Jehan de Wavrin, is the fullest and most accurate regarding the crossing. It was only used extensively by historians beginning with Jorga and Dąbrowski. It clearly indicates the role of the Genoese and artillery in enabling the crossing.

The emperor's comments are reasonable. There is no doubt that he and his men would have found it difficult to take on Halil Pasha and his force of 5,000 cavalrymen, 400 arquebusiers and 200 cannoneers which he was bringing with him to the straits.[261] But it is possible that they could have harried the troops and at least hindered their operations enough to allow the fleet to perform its duties. The emperor knew that the Ottomans would never allow Byzantine aggression to go unanswered. So far, the Emperor had confined himself to diplomatic support and had not taken an active part in the anti-Ottoman offensive (though his brother, Constantine Dragas, had). In a strict sense he had not violated the treaty concluded between the two parties in 1442, despite the fact that his non-military assistance to the crusader war effort was well-recognized and well-attested to by both sides. Even the two ships the emperor was offering to join the fleet were most likely those that had been supplied to the Byzantines by the papacy and the Venetians a few years prior. The emperor could argue that these galleys, though flying the Byzantine flag, were crewed and captained by foreigners (Venetians) who were acting of their own accord. The excuse was a flimsy one, which was probably why the emperor had not offered the ships earlier, but it might allow the Byzantines some diplomatic space to maneuver out of another confrontation if the crusade should fail. In any case, this was the only support Wavrin and his men would get.

Halil Pasha arrived on the European shore around 15 October. The next day, having witnessed the Grand Vezir's arrival, Murad himself walked down to the shore of the Asian side with his men, which numbered about three or four thousand soldiers according to Wavrin. The sultan erected a crimson tent below the Anadolu Hisarı, whereupon "five or six camels came down from the mountain, all covered in red and carrying, as we knew, metal from which cannon and bombards were cast on the following night." Halil Pasha likewise set up his own artillery on the European side and while inspecting the positions he told his chief gunner, Saruca, that if he could harry the enemy ships enough to enable the sultan to cross the straits, "'whatever you wish from the Padishah will be provided for.' Offering up a prayer, the chief gunner Saruca replied: 'While I am here lying in wait with cannon at the ready, never mind enemy ships, if

[261] These numbers are supplied by Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 607). Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 128) simply says Halil had with him seven or eight thousand Turks.


550M FROM SHORE TO SHORE
550M
GENOESE TRANSPORT BARGES, APP. 20
OTTOMAN ARTILLERY AT RUMELI HISAR * (HALIL PASHA)
OTTOMAN ARTILLERY AT ANADOLU HISAR (SULTAN MURAD II)
ALLIED CHRISTIAN VESSELS 2 BURGUNDIAN, 2 RAGUSAN, 2 BYZANTINE (WALERAN DE WAVRIN)
BOSPHORUS STRAITS
GENOESE-ADMINISTERED PERA
CONSTANTINOPLE
MURAD II'S CROSSING FROM ASIA INTO EUROPE
*THE ACTUAL FORTIFICATIONS OF RUMELI HISAR WERE NOT IN EXISTENCE AT THE TIME, BUT WERE BUILT SEVERAL YEARS LATER PRIOR TO MEHMET II'S CONQUEST OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

Map 7. Murad's crossing 1444.

God Most High is willing, I shall not let even a bird fly past. The felicitous sultan need not worry. He has only to board his galley.'"[262]

The next morning the Turkish soldiers in Anadolu Hisarı began boarding the boats that had been brought by the Genoese. The crusader vessels, now joined by the two Byzantine galleys, raised anchor and set out to block their passage. At this point the boats containing the Ottoman troops fled to either the Asian or European shore, and when the crusader galleys tried to pursue they were fired upon by the batteries of artillery and "other missiles." Unable to approach the shore, and unable to main-

[262] Gazavât, p. 47 (Imber's translation, p. 84).

tain their position indefinitely by rowing, the galleys returned to anchor. At this point the enemy transport boats began to cross again. Once more the galleys raised anchor and pursued only to see the transport boats flee in haste to either shore under the cover of the Ottoman artillery. Enemy fire began to take a toll on the fleet. The crusaders witnessed with a bit of relief the destruction of the largest bombard, some forty inches in diameter, which burst after only three shots. Yet the remaining guns inflicted "great damage on the galleys. Some were holed or splintered and some members of the crews were dead or wounded."

The sultan waited until sundown on 18 October to cross.[263] As if by divine favor (according to the Ottomans) or the devil's assistance (according to Wavrin) a great wind arose and blew so violently that the crusader ships were hardly able to hold anchor, much less successfully row up-current to block the crossing boats. Murad himself was invited to cross, and after saying a brief prayer he rode his horse to the shore and boarded one of the boats. In order to cover the sultan's crossing the Ottomans opened fire with all of their guns. "As if by some miracle, the cannon balls passed over the Burgundian ships and struck the ones belonging to the Emperor, damaging them more than any other."[264] The Ottomans succeeded in sinking one of the Byzantine ships and heavily damaging the other.[265] By the morning, it was evident that the sultan had crossed over into Europe. The Turks raised a white pennant, a signal to parley with the enemy. Wavrin raised a similar flag and a Turk came in a boat to speak with the captain. The Ottoman messenger was brief and direct: "'The King of

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[263] Halil İnalcik (Fatih Devri, p. 73) writes that the crossing took place on 20 October, citing the date given in Mehmet II's letter to the Cairo sultan: (يوم الاثنين السابع من رجب), or Monday, the 7th of Rajab. Though 7 Rajab does correspond to 20 October, in the civil Fatimid Calendar in use at the time (also known as the Misri or Bohra calendar) this day corresponds to the Julian date of 19 October. This date is further supported by the day of the week mentioned in the text, for 19 October was indeed a Monday. To this it should also be added that the Islamic day begins at sunset. If the sultan crossed at night, as the texts suggest but by no means states openly, then Monday the 7th of Rajab could refer to either the night of 18 October in the Julian calendar or the day of 19 October. This matches up almost perfectly with Wavrin's account. Wavrin (p. 128) writes that Halil Pasha arrived "on about 15 October 1444." He goes on to inform us that Murad arrived the day after Halil. The day after that, i.e. about 17 October, the crossing began. Wavrin says that the crossing lasted "two days and two nights," though he seems to only narrate the events of one day and one night. It is doubtful that the sultan would have been among the first to cross, before they could determine the success or failure of the endeavor. He therefore most likely crossed on the night of 18 October.

[264] Wavrin, p. 128.

[265] Gazavât, p. 48.

Hungary and the Hungarians have perjured and violated their oath. Murad Bey is going to do battle against them.' Striking his hand on the hilt of his sword, he added: 'But by this sword, we shall be victorious.' With this he departed."[266]

Arriving on the far shore Murad happily greeted Halil Pasha and his men and granted "countless gifts and favors" to the gunner Saruca. He then sent his Chief Door-keeper (kapıcı başı) and a certain Muhtesibzade on swift horses to Edirne to inform his son and the rest of the Porte that he had crossed safely and was en route to the capital. When these messengers arrived the despondent atmosphere at the court immediately lifted, "the dead among them came to life, and the living became seven-headed dragons."[267] Murad proceeded with all haste to the capital, making himself visible to the people of the countryside in an attempt to dispel the prevalent fear, not stopping until he reached Edirne. When he arrived he was greeted in splendor.

The ships guarding the Dardanelles likewise failed in their mission. On September 27th Cyriacus of Ancona had observed the presence of the pontifical fleet in the Dardanelles and noted that "both the Asiatic and European shores are guarded strategically by our galleys." He even spoke personally to Alviso Loredano about the mission.[268] This force must have still been in place when Murad II decided to cross at the Bosphorus. The Turks made attempts to harrass the Venetian and papal ships.[269] Yet what ultimately confounded the galleys guarding the Hellespont was a lack of supplies. A Ragusan document from November 1445 concerns the trial of a Ragusan naval captain named Kisilicic.[270] He had been provided with one of the largest Ragusan supply ships to re-supply the crusader fleet, yet was waylaid in assisting a shipwrecked Genoese vessel and by the time he was destined to reach the straits the winds were unfavorable. One of the crusader galleys was dispatched to find the re-supply vessel, but to no avail. Faced with famine it was perhaps at this time that the

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266 Wavrin, p. 129.

267 Gazavât; Imber's translation, p. 85.

268 Bodnar, nr. 17, pp. 96–97.

269 İnalcik (*Fatih Devri*, p. 73) writes that the Venetian vessels guarding the straits were dispelled by Kara Rahmanoğlu Hamza, who had assembled the local people of İzmit to engage in a maritime ghaza against the fleet. I have not found any confirmation of this in western sources, who cite instead a lack of supplies as the cause of the fleet's abandonment of its post, or in other Ottoman sources. It is likely that the account concerning Rahmanoğlu's activities is exaggerated.

270 Krekic, "Dubrovnik's Participation," p. 11.

ships conducted shore operations to gather supplies. Zaifi[271] tells us that there were skirmishes in the Dardanelles between a force of 100 crusader archers (likely crossbowmen) equipped with 100 cannon as well as 400 janissaries and 500 azab infantry. During these amphibious operations a mill was burned in Eceabat and several houses in Lapseki. Aside from gathering food and provisions these operations may also have been an attempt to destroy ships meant to transport the Turks across and/or reprisals against the Genoese. In any case, the galleys' temporary[272] abandonment of their position allowed "a large number of pagan enemies" to cross the straits. This is confirmed by Zaifi who writes that a Genoese vessel based in the Port of Kilye, next to Eceabat, succeeded in transporting troops from the European to the Asian shore under cover of darkness.[273]

The planners in 1444 had every confidence that should the fleet actually attain its position in the straits it would have little problem preventing an Ottoman crossing. The most insistent purveyors of this certainty were the Venetians, the most experienced and knowledgeable seafarers in the Eastern Mediterranean. Why, then, did the operation fail so miserably? The answer is surprisingly simple—Genoese and gunpowder. The former provided the means of transport and the latter the necessary security for the crossing to occur. 1444 marks the first time in history that coastal artillery was used on both sides of the straits to disable an enemy navy. One wonders if the Genoese hadn't had the inspiration several years before when Byzantine cannons had caused problems for their own vessels in the Golden Horn. The big disadvantage of gunpowder weapons, or indeed any large projectile at the time, was the inability to aim with great accuracy, particularly at a moving target. Yet the 550-meter bottleneck at Anadolu Hisarı negated this disadvantage. Numerous vessels

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271 Zaifi gives us information about some of these raids (Pehlivan, p. 606).

272 I write temporary here because the ships did not sail for home until after the Battle of Varna. The Ragusan ships returned and arrived at their home port in January 1445 (Krekic, "Dubrovnik's Participation," p. 11). Cardinal Condulmer and Wavrin later sailed on with Wavrin into the Black Sea and up the Danube.

273 Pehlivan, p. 606. See also Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 128): "As has been said, the Turks enjoyed the services of the Genoese. One night, they found a way of ferrying some of their forces across the straits below Gallipoli without our men in the galleys realising." Długosz (p. 317) also makes reference to a crossing at Gallipoli under cover of darkness. This may refer to the later crossing of the Sanjak Bey of Gallipoli. İnalcik (Fatih Devri, p. 73) writes that the main portion of the Anatolian army crossed at Gallipoli. He does not, however, give his source for this assertion. The sources mentioned above suggest that the forces which were able to cross at the Dardanelles were limited in number, probably not exceeding those which crossed with Murad at the Bosphorus.

were packed in tight and forced to move close to shore to engage the enemy transports. There was limited space to maneuver and avoid enemy fire. The size and force of the projectiles that the cannon now fired made them a greater threat than earlier weapons. Wavrin himself noted that one hit from the Ottomans' forty-centimeter cannon would have been sufficient to sink an entire galley. The Turks did not only use cannons and mortars but arquebusiers as well. Though Wavrin and his men tried to return fire, the Ottomans had the advantage of shelter whereas the sailors on the ship did not (there were no gun ports below deck as in later ages). Though the winds and the current were a factor, Wavrin noted that they only hastened the Ottoman crossing, which would have still occurred, he supposed, though perhaps taken twice as long. Instead it was the presence of the Ottoman artillery on either shore which rendered the blockade impossible. The only remedy would have been to dispatch a land army to drive the Turks from one or the other banks. "In truth," he commented, "it is impossible for galleys to guard the straits unless they control one of the two shores."[274]

The Ottoman artillery would have been useless if ships had not been available to ferry Murad across. It is therefore striking not only that the Genoese assisted the Ottomans, the notorious enemies of Christendom, but that they did it with such alacrity. Though this treachery was deemed offensive by other Christian states, looking at the greater context it was not at all surprising. The Genoese had had a long-lasting relationship of mutual assistance with the Ottomans that led all the way back to the time of Orhan in the mid-fourteenth century.[275] The sultan had assisted the Genoese military and logistically at a time when they were blockaded in the straits by the Venetians.[276] The ensuing Genoese-Ottoman partnership was a fruitful one. Through this partnership the Genoese obtained the support of the most important land power in the Eastern Mediterranean, one which dominated the straits leading into the Black Sea. The Ottomans benefitted as well. During the time of Murad II they lacked a navy that could rival the Venetians. Genoese support compensated for this deficiency. The Ottoman-Genoese alliance was established early on during Murad's reign, when as mentioned (chapter two) the Genoese

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274 Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 129).

275 See Serban Papacostea, "Genes, Venise et la croisade de Varna," *Balcanica Posnaniensa* VIII (1997): 27–37.

276 Ibid., p. 31.

assisted Murad in crossing at Gallipoli. This enabled him to pursue and defeat his rival to the throne at a time when western galleys were blocking the straits, a situation quite similar to that of 1444. Murad returned the favor in 1434, helping the Genoese quell a revolt that had been fomented by the Venetians. Murad offered them not only provisions but soldiers as well. His assistance proved decisive in suppressing the revolts and warding off the encroachments of their rivals.[277]

It was on account of their rivalry with the Genoese that from 1443–1444 the Venetians had lobbied the papacy and Wladislas so strongly for possession of Gallipoli in the event of a successful expedition. Control of this port would give them a position in the straits stronger than the Genoese themselves, who thrived in their colony at Pera, across the Golden Horn from Constantinople. From Gallipoli, the Venetians could have reasserted control of the Pontic trade and driven out their rivals altogether. It seems shocking that in the fall of 1444 there were four times as many ships patrolling the straits near Gallipoli as in the Bosphorus. Almost all of these ships, under the command of Condulmer and Loredano, were Venetian-manned and Venetian-built. Although the greater length and breadth of these straits as well as the fact that they were a more usual crossing point for the Ottomans necessitated more ships than in the Bosphorus, the imbalanced ratio of 4:1 still gives pause. A logical explanation is the motivations mentioned above. The Venetians wanted the blockade to succeed, but they also wanted to ensure that their troops were in place in sufficient numbers to seize Gallipoli and its environs when the time came. This point was not lost on the Genoese. They realized a crusader victory would result in Venetian dominance of the straits as well as the Black Sea. This would spell the end of the Genoese trade empire. Faced with this existential threat, they happily assisted Murad and the Ottomans, as much if not more in their own interests than in their willingness to honor an enduring partnership.[278]

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[277] Ibid., p. 32.

[278] Some sources claim that the Genoese were paid for the crossing (e.g. Długosz, p. 317). Beheim (Line 932) even writes that they were paid as much as a gold florin per head (though he mistakes the Venetians for the Genoese). If 3,000 troops were transported across, this sum would be handsome but not unreasonable.

The Land Expedition Continues

Still under the impression that Murad was stuck in Asia and the fleet was guarding the straits, the crusaders were marching quickly south in an attempt to cross the Balkans via the Shipka Pass. Once over the mountains, the road lay open to Edirne. While marching towards the pass, along a certain "insignificant river,"[279] the crusaders came across 28 "new" galleys which had been stowed away out of sight. They took this as a sign that the Turks had intended to raid and/or invade Hungary that year despite the treaty. This "obvious" treachery confirmed their conviction that they were not wrong in violating a peace that the Turks themselves did not intend to keep. It was a flimsy justification. After all, the vessels may have been intended for Wallachia and were likely constructed before the peace treaty had been signed. Nevertheless, their discovery caused great indignation among the army and henceforth whenever they came across any Turkish cities, castles, mosques or towns they set fire to them immediately and spared no living creature.[280]

In order to expedite their passage the crusaders sent forward a sizeable force armed with siege equipment and battle wagons.[281] The detachment's task was to seize the fortress of Tarnovo, which stood at the entrance to the Shipka Pass. This move was necessary prior to crossing. Otherwise, the amry risked being blocked in by the Turks at both ends of the pass, either while entering or returning from the plain, and becoming trapped inside the mountains. With limited food and the harsh winter approaching this was a risk the crusaders were not willing to take. Still in pursuit of the Christians Ferizbeyoğlu discovered their intentions and divided his force into two detachments, appointing his brother in command of the second. He then set up an ambush near Tarnovo using tactics

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[279] Pallatio, p. 462. This river was likely the Osam, unless the incident occured after they had departed from this river to head east.

[280] Ibid.

[281] Beheim, lines 471–480 (*Die Gedichte*, p. 342; Imber's translation, p. 174) simply refers to the men by the term "*sakman*," or baggage man. It is not certain what is meant by this, but the Gazavât (p. 46; Imber's translation, pp. 82–83) is clear as to the presence of numerous wagons. The Gazavât refers to two companies/regiments (*alay*) that the king designated for the task. The Gazavât makes it clear, however, that the detachment was vastly outnumbered by Ferizbeyoğlu's men. According to Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 608), whose numbers are often suspect, the crusader detachment numbered 100 men and Ferizbeyoğlu 5,000. The Gazavât also states that the men were tasked with seizing the castle. This would explain the presence of the wagons which could have been used to transport the army's artillery and other equipment necessary for a siege/assault.

quite typical of the Ottoman army. According to the plan Ferizbeyoğlu's brother was to engage the enemy advanced detachment with a few soldiers and then retreat in haste to a position where Ferizbeyoğlu would be waiting with a much larger force. The plan worked perfectly:

> As the infidels who are as low as the dust were approaching Tarnovo Castle, beating their drums, they noticed a few Turkish soldiers standing on one side. They at once seized the opportunity to attack them, and these too joined the battle, luring them into the ambush. At that moment they came to the point where the trap was laid, Ferizbeyoğlu and his troops raised their horsetails and standards and, beating their war-drums, drew their swords with a single cry of "Allah! Allah!" They attacked those accursed ones with such vigour that the infidels who are as low as the dust assumed it was the Sultan Murad and immediately took to flight.[282]

Beheim writes that of the 500 men dispatched only 200 returned. The Turks were able to seize a good portion of the wagons, one of which they filled with 30 crusader heads. They dispatched the severed heads along with 100 prisoners to Edirne.

Despite this setback one has to wonder why Hunyadi and Wladislas didn't simply march up to the fortress with the main force and seize it, as they would later do when attempting to cross further east. Hungarian reconnaissance may have informed them that the Shipka Pass was no longer traversable. Şehabeddin Pasha along with elements of the Rumelian Army had already moved north to Stara Zagora in order to effect Çavuş Bey's strategy of blocking the mountain passes.[283] Having received a report from one of his scouts that the crusaders were intending to cross via the Shipka Pass, he moved his men even farther north to Kazanlak, i.e. the base of the pass, and waited for the crusaders to approach. Realizing that the pass was guarded by a large Ottoman force there was no desire on the part of the crusaders to repeat the Battle of Zlatitsa. Faced with the presence of Şehabeddin and his army they changed their route. This detour east cost the crusaders essential time.

The defence of Tarnovo and the blocking of the Shipka pass were an important strategic success for the Ottomans. Still, Şehabeddin and his men were camped far from court, running low on supplies and money and unsure of the situation in the capital. The Beylerbey of Rumelia was

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[282] Gazavât, p. 46 (Imber's translation, pp. 82–83).

[283] Gazavât, p. 51 (Imber's translation, p. 87). The Turks referred to Stara Zagora both as Eski Zaghra and Eski Hisar.

therefore overjoyed when Muhtesibzade arrived to inform him that Murad had crossed and was headed towards the capital, having brought along hordes of men and materiel.[284] He sent a message to Ferizbeyoğlu informing him of the news and ordering him to continue pursuing the enemy. Above all Ferizbeyoğlu should keep him informed of the crusaders' movements "so that, until the Padishah (Murad) arrives, we can endeavor to stop the infidels from crossing the passes which we have blocked."[285]

The crusaders were "extremely dispirited"[286] by their inability to move quickly south through the Shipka Pass, a move which would have allowed them to reach the capital before the Porte could finish gathering its army. They held a council and decided to try and break through further east. After striking camp they headed down the road towards Shumen, a move which Ferizbeyoğlu, having received Şehabeddin's message, reported to the beylerbey immediately. Along the way, the crusaders enacted a striking change in strategy. Whereas before they had chosen to bypass heavily guarded fortresses along their route that could not be easily taken, they now chose to quickly subdue each stronghold despite the expense in men, time and materiel. A clear indication of this new strategy was the so-called Act of Nrem.[287] It must have been published in late October, after the defeat near Tarnovo but before the siege of Shumen. The edict grants safe conduct to all Turks garrisoned in the castles of Shumen, Petricha, Mihalitsh, Varna, Caverna, Galatha and other castles in the region should they abandon their fortresses and flee to Gallipoli and then to Asia. Should they persist in resisting, the king vowed to fight them by every means at his disposal. Copies of this document were given to three captured Turks, who in exchange for their lives were given the responsibility of publishing the decree to the garrisons of the aforementioned fortresses and the peoples of the province.

The Act of Nrem was a psychological tool meant to expedite the new policy of seizing and destroying all Ottoman fortresses in their path. In several cases the document seems to have served its purpose.[288] But why the sudden change in strategy? The answer, it seems, would be the dis-

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284 Ibid.

285 Ibid.

286 Gazavât, p. 51 (Imber's translation, p. 86).

287 *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. II, nr. 303, pp. 451–452.

288 Pallatio presents the Act of Nrem as a demonstration of Wladislas' great clemency. Yet it seems it was more for the purpose of demoralizing the Turks by giving them a viable option of desertion.

heartening news that Murad had succeeded in crossing the straits. Pallatio is not specific in stating when this news arrived, only that it occurred at around the same time (*interea*) as the issuance of the Act of Nrem. The messenger must have moved very quickly, covering the nearly 500km separating the straits and Shumen in just under two weeks,[289] passing the entire time through Ottoman-controlled territory. As mentioned above, the same message had already reached Şehabeddin several days prior. News of the sultan's crossing would have forced the crusaders to rethink their plan. They now had to face the very likely possibility that Şehabeddin's army as well as Murad would move to block the passes further east, preventing any attempts to cross the Balkans.

The crusaders were faced with three options. They could simply retreat back the way they had come. This would mean returning home in shame and defeat. Wladislas had discarded the advantageous peace with the Ottomans in order to undertake the campaign, to turn back now would ruin his reputation as well as Hunyadi's and Cesarini's. There was no doubt that the Ottomans would make that retreat as difficult as possible. Their second option was to move east to the coast. It is likely that a message had already been sent out ordering Condulmer to bring some ships to Varna to resupply and possibly evacuate the army. The last option was to attempt to break through the Balkans at one of the passes further east and encounter the Ottomans before they had enough time to assemble their entire force. In fact, it seems that the crusaders chose to maintain all three options. They would move east with the intention of crossing the Balkans and/or moving to the coast. At the same time they would reduce the intervening fortresses and strongholds so as to protect their rear and enable an eventual retreat. By seizing the fortresses and engaging the enemy they could also make the claim, should they return home without having faced the sultan's army, that they had at least inflicted some significant losses. The fact that they were still earnest about crossing the Balkans, however, is evident in the haste with which they assaulted the several Turkish fortresses along their route despite the great cost to the army.

The Ottomans were well-aware that the crusaders could still cross the Balkans and reach the capital. After Murad's celebrated arrival he set up

[289] Torcello, in his "aviso" (see chapter one) stated that it took 18 days for an army to march from Vidin to Constantinople. Provadia is significantly closer to Constantinople than Vidin, and so the fact that the news reached the crusaders in less than two weeks is quite plausible.

his camp outside Edirne and he and the divan debated their next move. According to the Gazavât,[290] the 12-year-old Mehmet ordered the Grand Vizier to entreat the sultan to allow him to lead the military expedition. Halil refused on the basis of Mehmet's youth and inexperience. It seems, however, that Mehmet was pushed in this direction by his close mentors Zaganos and Ibrahim. These two men would later become intense rivals of Halil Pasha at the Ottoman court. Their star had risen along with Mehmet's assumption of the sultanate. They realized that the return of Murad and Mehmet's abdication would similiarly weaken their position. Murad refused Mehmet's request as made by Halil Pasha, who himself noted clearly that he was not making the request personally but on the behalf of the young sultan. Mehmet was instead given the task of watching over the city along with Halil Pasha. At the same time, Murad announced his resolve to wage "a holy war to attack the enemy."[291] His declaration of jihad was made official after consulting with the ulema of Edirne. In accordance with sharia law, they stated that "'because the infidels who are as low as the dust are attacking us, it is an obligation on all of us to join the holy war.'"[292]

The Ottomans at Shumen paid no heed to Wladislas' warnings in the Act of Nrem. Given the inaccessibility and strength of the hilltop fortress they expected the army would merely pass them by. Yet the Hungarians were determined to take Shumen by storm.[293] The fortifications lay atop a cliffed plateau overlooking the city. The Hungarians undertook to assault it almost immediately. They bombarded the walls with cannon and missile fire, to which the Turks responded in kind with their own cannons and arquebus. Greatly outnumbered, the Turkish garrison soon became spent and exhausted. On the third morning the Hungarians brought up ladders to scale the walls. "When the warriors of Islam—men and women—saw this, they fought more vigorously than words can describe. Corpse piled upon corpse, and when the infidels saw that there would be no end to this, they sent forward about thirty thousand (sic!) infidels clad in steel armor. As a result, the weapons that the warriors of

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[290] Gazavât, p. 50. Halil İnalcik (Fatih Devri, pp. 73–74) adds some insight to these events.

[291] Gazavât, p. 50 (Imber's translation, p. 86).

[292] Ibid.

[293] Both the Gazavât (pp. 52–53; Imber's translation, pp. 88–89) and Beheim (lines 431–460; *Die Gedichte*, pp. 345–346; Imber's translation, pp. 173–174) describe this siege in great detail, and the details in the two narratives correspond to one another quite startlingly.

Islam wielded could strike them but could not cut and, clad like this, they began to pour into the castle." Having lost the keep to the heavily-armored invaders the Ottoman commanders and about fifty other men sought refuge in the central tower. The crusaders employed a common tactic to flush these last defenders out.[294] They blasted holes in the tower with their cannons and then placed straw and wood and other combustibles in the breached hole. The Ottomans offered to surrender but the crusaders refused. They were intent on sending a strong message to the other fortresses along their route. They set fire to the tower. The defenders, as much on account of the flames as the smoke, leapt from the top only to be greeted by sharpened stakes and spears below. The victory had been costly. According to Beheim, Wladislas had "lost more good men there than he had ever lost before any other castle."[295]

The army remained at Shumen for two or three days to recover and regroup. The marauding crusaders then moved further east toward Madara, following the same route which served as a railbed in the nineteenth century. Madara was an ancient Bulgarian castle hewn out of the cliffs located near the village of the same name. The fortress was empty. The inhabitants had fled to Provadia, where the Ottomans were planning their main defense. Having burned Madara to the ground the crusaders continued on to Novi Pazar.[296] The siege lasted only one day, and after-

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[294] George of Hungary was captured by Murad and his men during their raid into Hungary by the same tactic. Wavrin, while fighting with the Wallachians in 1445, also used this method to take a tower from the Turks.

[295] Beheim, ut supra. The Gazavât confirms the Christians' pyrrhic victory in rather dramatic terms.

[296] I do not place much reliance on the chronology presented in Beheim. Though he often tries to give the number of days since the last point of departure, it is not always clear to which point of departure he is referring. Regarding the seizure of Novi Pazar (lines 401–410) for instance he writes: "They were on the march for two days. On the third day, they came to... [Novi Pazar] ...The Christians besieged it, and it was lost on the fourth day." It is not clear, either in the translation or in the original German, if the "fourth day" refers to the fourth day of the march (my assumption) or the fourth day of the siege. There are other more general problems with Beheim's chronology. Geography demands that the seizure of Oryahovo took place before the siege of Nicopolis (as reported in Zaifi and the Gazavât). Beheim places it after. The same is true of the attack on Tarnovo. The Gazavât tells us that the crusaders sent forward the detachment to conduct the siege as they were heading in the direction of the fortress. Beheim places the Battle of Tarnovo after his narration of the siege of Shumen. This makes little geographic, chronological or strategic sense. The same is true of Novi Pazar, which he says was taken before Shumen, a route which would have required the crusaders to advance, then retreat to the southwest, only to march east again. Though Beheim's accounts of the various conflicts seem highly accurate—the battle narratives of the Gazavât and Beheim's poem correspond to one another amazingly well— his chronology is unsustainable in many

wards "whatever Turks were in it were slaughtered. Many people had taken refuge there, and all suffered the pain of death. The Christians cunningly killed people and cattle. Whatever they could seize, suffered. No one could put his foot down on the ground, without treading on dead people wherever he went."[297]

Provadia is the gateway to a pass leading south over the Balkans to Aydos.[298] The fortress at Provadia is known in Bulgarian as Ovech, and in Turkish as Taş Hisarı, or "rock fortress." It's name derives from the fact that it is carved into the very rock of the mountainside on which it rests. The crusaders needed to seize Provadia before crossing the mountains, or else risk having their avenue of retreat cut off and being blockaded into the pass on both ends. The description of the siege is the first instance in which accounts in Beheim and the Gazavât decidedly differ. According to the Gazavât, the crusaders moved cannon up to the fortress in order to begin the bombardment. "However, the people of Porovadi (Provadia) subjected them to such a hail of cannon and arquebus fire that, finding no place to shelter, they began to fear for their lives. Realizing that they had bitten off more than they could chew, the infidels backed off and continued their march."[299]

Beheim, on the other hand, writes that the castle was taken and goes into considerable detail describing the siege and final assault.[300] The crusaders were forced to charge their way up the rock-hewn steps of the fortress, but they succeeded in taking the forecourt. The Turks, as at Shumen, fled into the central keep which was itself hewn out from the rock. At this point Beheim describes a curious incident that indicates Wladislas' own frustration with the incessant plundering and pillaging, even in the face of the enemy. While the defenders were holed up in the tower, the attackers became occupied with seizing plunder, including fine quality gar-

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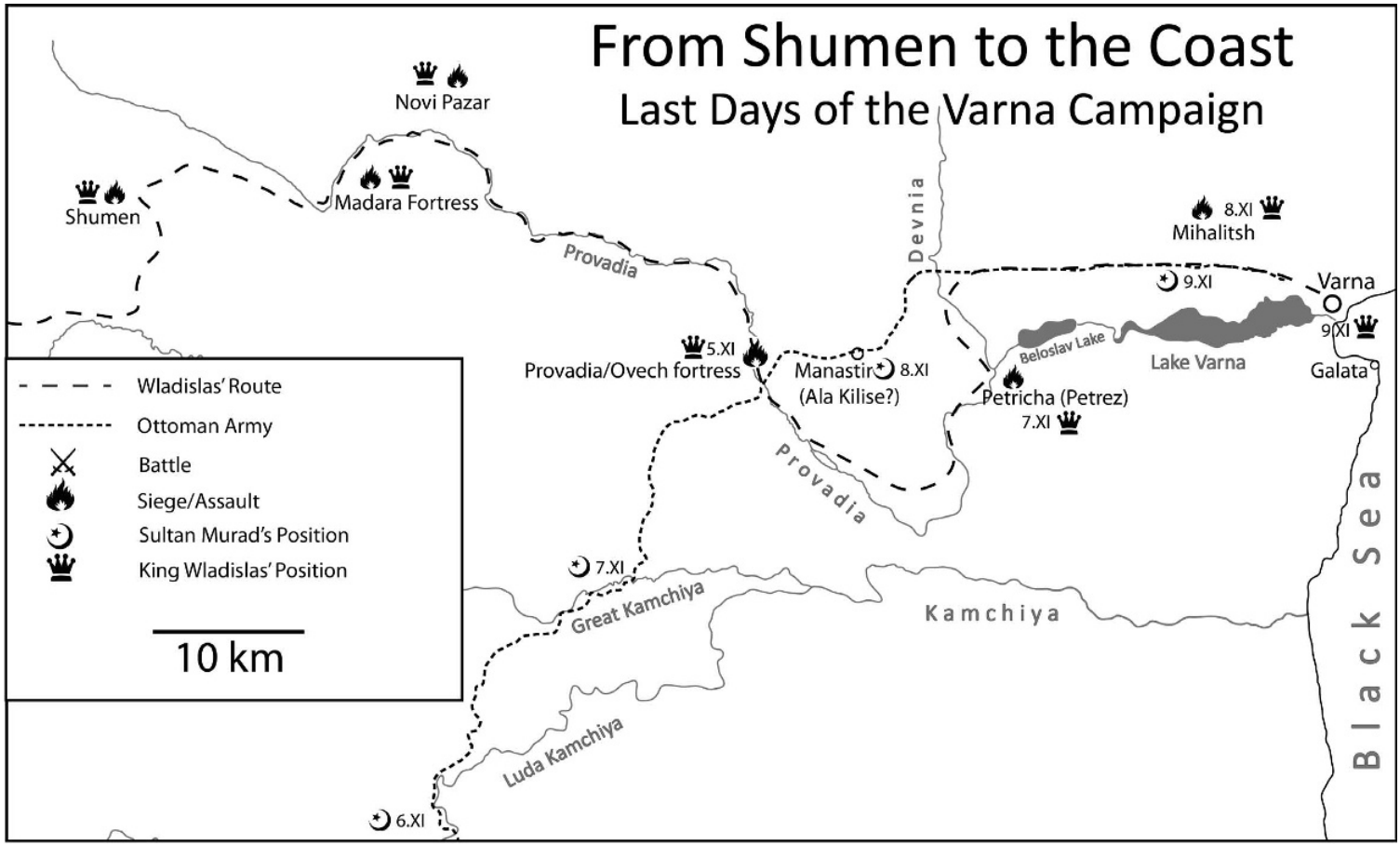
places. It is best to trust it only in corroboration with other sources, such as Pallatio and the Gazavât.

297 Beheim, lines 409–419 (Die Gedichte, p. 340; Imber's translation, p. 173).

298 This passage regarding Madara is found in the Gazavât (p. 54; Imber's translation, pp. 88–89) and Oruç Bey (p. 65).

299 Gazavât, 54 (Imber's translation, 89–90). It is possible that the Gazavât is referring to an assault on the actual town, whereas Beheim (lines 490–530; *Die Gedichte*, p. 343; Imber's translation, p. 174) is referring to an attack on the Ovech fortress which lay up in the hills just outside of town. Yet the Gazavât, in mentioning the flight of the citizens from Madara, states explicitly that they fled to Provadia castle (*Porovadiye nam kal'aya*).

300 The Ottoman historian Kashifi also writes that Provadia was taken by the crusaders, which perhaps lends Beheim's account more credence (Pehlivan, 609).



Map 8. From Shumen to Varna.

ments, which they loaded onto horses in such great quantity that they could not easily get down from the fortress. When Wladislas saw this, according to Beheim, "he blocked the gates in the castle. He despaired of their greed and said: 'Throw this away from you! We did not, if God wills, come here to see this!' He piled all the goods and clothes there were against the tower. Dry wood—everything that burns easily—and fire were laid against the tower."[301] The shocking scene at Shumen replayed itself here. They did not allow the Turks to surrender, and when they were driven out of the rock by the heat of the flames they were riddled with arrows. The castle was then razed and destroyed.

Sometime either shortly before or after the siege of Provadia the crusaders learned that despite their efforts, this pass too had been blocked. Their only recourse now was to head for the coast and the fortress of Varna, where they might wait for support from the fleet. The first fortress they came across was Petricha (Petricha), a hill-top fortress hewn into the rock, similar to Ovech fortress at Provadia. According to Beheim, the king set up his guns and began to bombard the fortress. When the siege was at its height Mircea II[302] brought up ladders to scale the walls. The defenders rushed to the point of attack and succeeded in casting the ladders off, killing around thirty of the Wallachian soldiers. Soon after the Hungarians breached the wall, which in itself killed two dozen defenders. Among the victims of the bombardment were Christian women who pleaded with the king to show mercy. The Turks sought to escape via a secret tunnel, yet Mircea discovered the point of egress and slaughtered the enemy troops as they emerged. Wladislas, according to Beheim, ordered his men to cease fire out of concern for the Christian women. Despite the king's reticence they succeeded in seizing the castle and cast down the remaining Turks into the moat below, whom they fired upon as they emerged from the water. They then razed the castle. Turning their march towards Varna and the coast, they relinguished hope that they might pass through the Balkans.

In the meantime Murad had left Yambol and on 4 November joined up with Şehabeddin and the troops of Rumelia at place called Hisarlık, most likely near Aydos or the entrance to the pass that Şehabeddin had been

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301 Beheim, Lines 490–530 (*Die Gedichte*, p. 343; Imber's translation, p. 174)

302 Beheim, Lines 531–580 (*Die Gedichte*, pp. 344–345; Imber's translation, p. 175) says this was "voivode Trakal," i.e. Vlad's son Mircea II. He had accompanied the crusaders on the expedition since Nicopolis.

holding with his men.[303] Prior to setting out from Yambol the sultan had ordered Danışmanoğlu to bring to bring up the Ottoman cannon, stating "We are approaching the enemy and we may need them."[304] Having linked up with the Rumelian army, Murad decided to "advance that day with great caution. We should cross the mountains and fall upon the infidels who are as low as the dust as soon as possible."[305] On 5 November the army set out north to cross the Balkans, camping in the western end of the Misivri valley. The following day, 6 November, they forded the (Luda) Kamchiya river and descended into the Nadir[306] valley. On 7 November, still heading north and east, the army camped on the banks of the Great Kamchiya river.

While the Ottomans were advancing north the crusaders had nearly reached the coast. As they drew close to Varna they decided to take another nearby fortress known as Mihalitsh.[307] They besieged it at night, and the Turks, realizing that they hid little chance of success, in part due to the decrepit state of the fortifications, decided to exit the fortress and fight the crusaders outside the walls.[308] Hunyadi gave the order for a large contingent of his men to don their armor and advance. "The warriors of Islam realized that swords were no use against these infidels, and at once grabbed hold of axes, clubs and maces and with these continued the great fight. In the end the warriors were martyred—may God have mercy on all

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303 Gazavât (Imber's translation, p. 91). I have been unable to locate it, along with a number of other old Ottoman place names in Bulgaria. Perhaps it refers to the old fortifications of "Aetos," located northwest of the modern city of the same name. Three towers of this fortress still remain today.

304 Ibid.

305 Gazavât, p. 56 (Imber's translation, p. 92)

306 Ibid., It is my assumption that the army left Aydos north through the passes leading to Provadia. This explains the crossing of the Kamchiya river twice (once the Luda Kamchiya and once the Great Kamchiya) mentioned in the text. It does not explain, however, the army's encampment in the Misivri (Messembria) valley after crossing the Luda Kamchiya. Both Kamchiya rivers run north of the Misivri valley. This can only be explained by a mistake on the part of the author, who confused the order of march for the first two place names, meaning the army camped first in the Misivri valley, and the next night somewhere in the Luda river valley. Because of the difficulties in determining certain place names, I have left several in the original Turkish, in the hopes that Bulgarian geographers will have better success than I.

307 The fortress was located near present-day Aksakova, a suburb of Varna north of Petricha and a few miles west of Varna proper.

308 The Gazavât (pp. 54–55; Imber's translation, p. 90) mentions the siege of Petricha but not that of Mihalitsh. However, the battle narrative in the Gazavât for the siege of Petricha fits with Beheim's battle narrative (lines 591–600; Die Gedichte, p. 346; Imber's translation, p. 176) for the siege of Mihalitsh, and I therefore include it with the latter.

of them—and, what is more, the infidels who are as low as the dust crowded into the castle and seized it and did with it what they had done with Shumen. There is no pleasure in telling this tale."[309]

The crusaders were at this point only a few miles from the coast. The king's policy of "surrender or perish" began to have the desired effect. Upon the army's approach the Turkish commanders of the Varna garrison fled by boat into the Black Sea. The remainder of the garrison both at Varna and the other nearby fortresses of Galata and Caverna[310] also surrendered to the king and his army, fearing the same fate that befell the garrisons at Shumen or Petrich. The fortress of Varna was in a state of disrepair,[311] and the Hungarians were left with no time to try and shore up the defenses, as the entire Ottoman army was fast upon them.

On 8 November the Ottomans reached a place called Ala Kilise,[312] likely near Provadia. Only a day's march from the enemy, whom they might now encounter at any time, they halted in order to reorganize their ranks. The sultan met with his commanders that evening, beginning with his loyal, paid infantry, i.e. the janissaries and azabs:

> He greeted them all and said: 'You are my companions in every campaign. Let us see how zealously you strike down the infidels who are as low as the dust, the enemies of our religion, for the sake of Islam. You know for certain what the merits of holy war are, and how exalted the status of martyrs. Now, my slaves, just as we were born, so too must we die. It is therefore incumbent on both you and me to fight valiantly, now, while the opportunity is there, and to wage a holy war. Those of us who kill will be holy warriors, and those of us who die will be martyrs. Together let us achieve our desires in this world and the next.'[313]

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309 Gazavât, ut supra.

310 Pallatio (p. 463) mentions these three castles, but says there were others he could not remember. Beheim says that "four castles handed their keys over to the king."

311 Wavrin, p. 130.

312 Gazavât, p. 56 (Imber's translation, p. 92) This assessment is based on the Ottoman army following the route describe in the earlier note above. There is indeed an Ala Kilise located north of Varna. But this makes little sense as the location in question, since the next day the Gazavât says they crossed the Divno river, which lies between Provadia and Varna and is nowhere near the Ala Kilise located north of Varna. The word "Ala Kilise" simply means "painted church" and it may have referred to the cave monastery at Manastir, or perhaps the frescoed chapels located within Ovech fortress. Again, it is my hope that Bulgarian geographers will be more fsuccessful in determining these locations.

313 Gazavât, ut supra.

Murad retired to his tent and spent the night "offering prayer and supplication until morning, rubbing his face in the earth." At dawn the next day, 9 November 1444, the Ottomans advanced in full battle array to a place called Harami Deresi (likely the plain of Varna),[314] about 7.5km[315] from the Christian camp at Varna. They posted sentries throughout the night, fully prepared to do battle the following day.

Michael Szilágyi[316] was on watch that evening.[317] Having spied the fires of the sultan's army in the distance, he came back to inform the king and his men. They held a council to describe what to do next. According to a number of sources[318] it was Hunyadi who advocated offering battle. In truth it would seem the Christians had little choice. They did not have the requisite supplies to withstand a lengthy siege, and Varna fortress was itself in a state of abject disrepair. They could not stay put, nor could they flee with the sea behind them and the Ottoman army before them.

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[314] Again, the exact location of "*Harami Deresi*" or "thieves' valley" is uncertain. Based on later events and an analysis of the terrain, as well as Christian accounts of the Ottoman army on the eve of the battle, the place should lie some four miles from the Christian camp to the north of Varna This leads me to believe that Harami Deresi simply refers to the plain of Varna, which was indeed a wide valley. The well-known town of Harami Deresi in the Burgaz district to the north is too far away to be considered the place mentioned here.

[315] This distance is given by Pallatio (p. 464), who says that the fires of the Ottoman camp were visible that night at a distance of about five mille passuum from the crusaders' position, which equates to roughly 7.5km (see map).

[316] Wavrin says it was Hunyadi who scouted out the enemy position. Yet it seems more likely that Hunyadi, who was commander-in-chief, entrusted this mission to his retainer, Szilágyi.

[317] The primary sources for the battle are the following: Gazavât, pp. 58–69 (Imber's translation, pp. 94–103); Oruç Bey, pp. 66–67. Turan, *Tarihi Takvimler*, pp. 42–43; Zaifi and Kasifi (Pehlivan, pp. 610–617); Neşri, pp. 65–67; Aşıkpaşazâde, pp. 144–145; The Anonymous Chronicle (Giese, ed.), pp. 68–70; Menage, p. 578; Kemal, *Selâtîn-Nâme* (*1299–1490*), ed. Necdet Öztürk (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kürümü, 2001), pp. 147–149; Konstantin Mihalović, pp. 77–79; Chalkokondyles, pp. 349–351; Doukas, p. 185; Paraspondylos, pp. 333–372; Beheim, lines 611–900 (*Die Gedichte*, pp. 346–355; Imber's translation, pp. 176–179); Długosz, pp. 318–327, whose account is almost entirely based off Pallatio (*Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, pp. 455–469); Wavrin (Imber's translation, pp. 131–132); Thuróczy, pp. 141–146. There are several documentary sources as well. Among them the various fethname issued after the battle (see below) and the letter of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini from December 1444 to the Duke of Milan (Wolkan, vol. 1, nr. 167, pp. 487–490). It is worth re-stating here that I decline to use Bonfini or Callimach, seeing them as secondary rather than primary sources. Rather than repeat these references over the next pages, I instead refer to the work and refer the reader to the references in this note with the words ut supra.

[318] e.g. Gazavât, p. 58; Paraspondylos, p. 352.

Yet it is reasonable to assume that the crusaders wanted a fight. Hunyadi, Wladislas and Cesarini had been denied an opportunity the previous year to take on the combined might of the Ottoman Empire in an open field of battle and they may have considered that their chances were quite good. Aside from being turned back at Zlatitsa, where the Ottoman terrain advantage was decisive, Hunyadi had not yet lost a major battle against the Turks. They were greatly outnumberd, but this had been the case on almost every occasion when the two armies had clashed. Yet still they had emerged victorious. As Zaifi writes, the crusaders enjoyed a great advantage on account of their heavy armor, which had posed a problem for the Ottomans throughout the 1444 campaign.[319] And there is no reason to exclude a pious belief that God himself would provide them with victory, as he had so many times in the past, despite the overwhelming odds against them.

That night, with the Ottoman army so close, the order was given "that every man should be ready to fight and stand by his weapons; that no one should leave the field, whether he was a baggage-man or anyone else; that every man should keep his armour on overnight; and that the horses should be left saddled. He (Wladislas) sent five thousand horsemen onto the roads to keep watch."[320] Off in the distance they could hear the Turkish war drums and see the enemy bonfires, so large that they "reached the sky."[321] Cesarini prepared the altar to say mass, and announced to the soldiers that they should confess their sins now. Their sacrifice in the coming battle, he assured them, would serve as absolute penance.[322]

The Battle of Varna

When morning came, the sultan set about arranging his men and preparing for battle. The Ottoman ranks were drawn up as follows. The Ottoman right wing was commanded by the Beylerbey of Anatolia—the sultan's son-in-law Güyeğü Karaca bin Abdullah Pasha. Directly beside Karaca

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319 Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 610) puts these words into Hunyadi's mouth as one of his arguments to do battle. Yet in the Gazavât as well there are several passages, some of which have been quoted above, that describe the difficulty the Ottomans had in penetrating the crusaders' heavy armor.

320 Beheim, ut supra.

321 Pallatio, ut supra.

322 That the crusaders confessed before the battle is mentioned in both Wavrin and Beheim.

Bey was Süleyman Bey,[323] leading the troops of Edirne. To his right was Fenarioğlu Hasan Pasha, the Sanjak Governor of Karesi. The marcher lord Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu, who led into battle his own slaves and serahor, served on the far right flank and was given the task of leading his men around to encircle the enemy.[324] Karaca Bey's total forces to include the provincial cavalry and the serahor numbered between 20,000 and 22,000 cavalrymen.[325] They were generally less experienced than their Rumelian counterparts, particularly when it came to fighting European armies. This may have prompted the decision to task two Rumelian commanders, Süleyman Bey and Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu to fight on his flank along with the Anatolians. The task of this flank, as of the flank on the right, was to outflank and encircle the crusaders by any means possible. Their route of advance was made through the open plain, but their ability to maneuver, and particularly to outflank, was made difficult by the lake and marshlands to the south.

To the left of the sultan was the Beylerbey of Rumelia Şehabeddin Pasha.[326] He organized his troops into maniples seven ranks deep, with small spaces between each maniple. Next to his formation was Mehmet Bey Ferizbeyoğlu with the men he had led in pursuit of the crusaders throughout the campaign. He was accompanied by the Kadi of Karnobat's troops (poss Mihal Beyoğlu'nun oğlu Hızır Bey). Next to him was Isa Bey Hasanbeyoğlu with the men he had led from Zambol and Zagora. Aside from this main formation of cavalry on the Ottoman left there were two others: that of the Chirmen Sanjak Governor Malkoçoğlu Murad Bey, and the Sanjak Governor of Priştina Davud Bey. The last of these, Davud

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[323] The positioning of the troops on the flank is based both off of explicit statements in the narrative as to positioning as well as later positions given for these units during the battle. For example, the Gazavât states that Suleyman Bey was stationed beside Karaca Bey. The fact that he was attacked by Mircea (referred to as the Wallachian voivode in the text) who was on the Christian right, nearest to the center, means that Suleyman Bey was likely on Karaca's left, not right side.

[324] The Gazavât only mentions him as Ibn Fenari, but Zaifi gives the full name (Pehlivan, p. 612).

[325] See chapter four. One is forced to resort to rough approximations. I assume a maximum of 15,000 provincial cavalrymen for the Anatolian flank and 5,000 serahor (there were probably around 10,000 serahor for the entire army). This is slightly lower than what is described in chapter four since it is doubtful that all the provincial cavalry or even the expected number of serahor had been able to mobilize from Anatolia on such short notice. As in 1443, the total Anatolian force was difficult to muster for warfare in Rumelia.

[326] The best and most reliable sources for the Ottoman formation and battle plan are the Gazavât and Zaifi.

Bey, commanded the serahor that had been called into service as a result of the general levy. Operating on the Ottoman far left, Davud Bey would attempt to outflank the crusaders and encircle them from the rear.[327] The total number of forces on the left flank under Şehabeddin's command thus numbered around 19,000 cavalrymen.[328]

The sultan's position along with the azabs and the Slaves of the Porte is a bit harder to determine, and my own assumptions are based on a close study of the terrain and the scant evidence in the sources. However, this is ultimately a question for battlefield archeologists. The Gazavât states vaguely that the sultan "mobilized the rear." His position during the early stages of the battle was most likely on a slight hill nearly in the center of the valley (see map), which afforded him a view of the city of Varna and the battlefield. From here, as was customary in pitched battles, the Ottomans could better observe the progress of the fight and exercise command and control. Pallatio (p. 465) and other accounts clearly state that the Ottoman troops attacked the Christian right flank (the only flank Pallatio could see) "from over the mountain." Pallatio makes it clear that this refers to the steep hillside leading up over 300 meters to a plateau north of the Plain of Varna (see map). Although there are several cart paths leading from the top of the ridge to the plain, it seems impossible that the Ottomans led their charge from on top of this hill to the plain below. Indeed, Pallatio states that the Ottomans moved forward gradually (*paulatim*) with the azabs (he mistakenly refers to the footsoldiers as janissaries) out in front. In other words, there was no careening charge from the plateau into the plain, but rather a deployment of the troops from the top of the plateau who then set up towards the base of the hill. Once reaching more level ground, at the base of this steep incline, the cavalry was freer to maneuver. It also seems impossible that Murad's position was at the village known as Golema Franga, at the top of this ridge. Again, given the height and steepness of the ridge this would have made command and control of the soldiers on the plain below nearly impossible, essentially cutting off the Sultan's men from his troops.

The actual Ottoman camp was likely in a valley near the aforementioned sultan's position during the battle. Murad retired to this position when it was realized that the Ottomans were in danger of losing the

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327 Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 612).

328 See chapter four. 19,000 troops refers to the 6,000 Serahor plus 13,000 provincial cavalrymen. I assume here that the Ottomans were able to mobilize almost all of the available Rumelian troops.

battle.[329] It was set up in accordance with standard Ottoman practice.[330] There was a deep trench on all sides, and the dirt removed was heaped up to create an embankment beside it. The "foreigners" then placed iron stakes on the embankment, and shields above those, from behind which they fired arrows and other missiles. When inside this position the Slave Cavalry of the Porte was stationed beside Murad, and the janissaries in front of him. Between the janissaries and the sultan were the camels, according to Pallatio approximately 500, laden with silks and other rich materials as well as sacks of gold.[331] Should the enemy invade, these sacks were cut open so as to slow the enemy distracted by the plunder. There were only two points of ingress and egress from the palisade and trench, both heavily guarded. During the battle, the çavuş would come and go, bearing news to the sultan of the battle's progress and conveying the sultan's orders to the men. On either side of the entrenched Imperial camp were two groups of azabs, each numbering approximately 6,000 soldiers.[332] These also were in a prepared position although not as elaborate a defensive position as the sultan. They were commanded, as in 1443, by Bıçakçı Reis and Ömer Kethüda.[333] The azabs, the janissaries and the sultan's own cavalry could and would be used as a reserve force, whose loyalty and personal dedication, not to mention dependence on Murad himself kept them by the sultan's side even when the battle progressed poorly.

On the morning of 10 November Mircea and 100 Wallachian cavalry who had been scouting out the enemy reported that the sultan's army was on the move and preparing for battle. It was now an hour past sunrise, and the crusaders could hear the Ottomans readying themselves. Hunyadi, as commander-in-chief, set up the Christian forces with an eye to preventing the Turks from accomplishing their main tactical goal—encirclement.[334] The Devno Lake in the south and the marshlands which

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[329] Beheim (ut supra) writes: [The Christians] quickly and with one accord came out of the wagenburg, and drove them (the Ottomans) from this field of battle back up the mountain. They slaughtered many Turks. Because the Emperor was losing and had achieved no victory, he took flight into a valley that he had found."

[330] See introduction.

[331] Pallatio, p. 466.

[332] This is a rough estimate, see chapter four.

[333] Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 609)

[334] See the accompanying maps regarding the battle, which owe a large debt to Dąbrowski (pp. 182–184). The crusader order of battle is taken from two main sources, Pallatio and Beheim. Pallatio was stationed on the right flank among Cardinal Cesarini's men. His view of the battle was limited, and he seems to only narrate what occurred on the right flank. Some historians place Hunyadi on the left flank of the crusader army.

extended west from it along the Devna River provided a suitable barrier on which to base the crusaders' left flank. Here Hunyadi placed five banderia. In order from left to right they were 1) the troops of Transylvania and 2) the Szeklers, commanded by Thomas Székely. Next came 3) Hunyadi's men as well as 4) Michael Szilágyis. Following these on the inside right of the crusader left flank was the 5) banderium of George Orosz. The left flank comprised the most experienced, hardy and numerous banderia in the army and was under the general command of Hunyadi and Michael Szilágyi. Many of the troops were composed of light or medium cavalry. They were highly mobile and ideally suited to conduct offensive operations against the Turks.

In the center were two banderia of the king numbering up to 4,000 troops.[335] The first banderium, flying the crusade banner of Saint George (a red cross on a white field) was commanded by Stephen Batory. Beside him was the other royal banderium under the command of Wladislas Banffi of Losoncz, who bore the royal flag. The king's own retinue and royal knights served in these ranks, as well as the mercenaries and the several hundred Polish troops comprising the king's bodyguard. From the center, they could be brought to bear at decisive moments on either flank.[336]

The right flank was likewise comprised of five banderia and was under the general command of the Bishop of Oradea, John de Dominis. From left to right, this flank consisted of a 1) banderium of Wallachians under the command of Mircea II,[337] 2) the banderium of the Bosnian Bishop-elect Raphael,[338] 3) the troops of Simon Rozgony, 4) the Thalloci family's

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This is based on a misreading of Pallatio, who simply writes that Hunyadi stationed "his men" on the left flank (p. 464): "a cuius arcus sinistro cornu penes lacum idem waywoda quinque vexilla locavit tum ex propriis tum ex baronibus Hungarorum." Beheim in an earlier passage describes twelve banderia of the Hungarian army and who led them. Though Hunyadi's retinue was on the left flank, most sources place him on the right flank. It would make sense if he were commanding the large banderium of troops in the center to the right of the King, the one flying the banner of Saint Ladislas, a position that would suit his rank as commander-in-chief. Indeed we see him early on taking part in the battle on the crusader right flank against Şehabeddin, not the crusader left.

335 See Dąbrowski, p. 183, footnote 1.

336 The Gazavât seems to assign this unit a position on the far-left flank, and refers to them as Wallachians under the command of Radul.

337 The Turkish sources refer to a certain Mire or Mir, possibly a shorter form of Mircea.

338 Pallatio only refers to it as another black banner of Hungarians. But since he does not mention Raphael elsewhere the reference must be to him and his men. This is possibly the Radul referred to on this flank by Turkish sources.

troops under the command of Frank Thalloci, 5) the crusade volunteers under the command of Cardinal Cesarini, 6) and on the far right the troops of John de Dominis. A larger percentage of the soldiers on this flank were heavily armored knights and due to the difficulty of advancing uphill they were designated primarily for defense against the troops of Rumelia under Şehabeddin, whose attempts to encircle the Hungarians they were tasked to prevent at all costs.

Behind the crusaders Hunyadi placed the tabor, upon which was mounted light artillery pieces as well as the customary crossbows and arquebuses. It was not drawn up in a closed square, as usual, but placed in a long arc mirroring the formation of the troops before it. Pallatio writes that this was done in order to encourage the troops to come forward and engage the enemy instead of remaining holed up in the tabor. Thuróczy writes[339] that "they decided that the war chariots should come behind each one of the lines at the same speed, when the time came to engage with the enemy, for the Hungarians were unequal in number to the Turks and therefore afraid that the men fighting in front would be attacked by the enemy in the hindmost part of the lines." The wagons would serve this purpose at the battle during Davud Bey's attempt to outflank the Christians early on. The mobile wagon train may also be an indication that the crusaders hoped to break through the Turkish lines in order to make their way home, even if they could not inflict a total defeat.[340] Yet it is also true that the Ottomans had learned from their experience with the tabor in 1443. Had the crusaders simply linked the wagons in a square, there seems little doubt that the Ottomans would have simply besieged it, an eventuality for which the tabor was ill-equipped. It would have only been a matter of days until the soldiers ran out of water.

Phase One

The Hungarians marched forward in the morning in the aforementioned arc formation to a place approximately two miles distant from the fortress. This prevented the crusaders from having to fight with their backs to the sea, and gave them some measure of space to maneuver to their rear. "There we waited for nearly three hours for the Turks to march. Although the air was tranquil and the sea calm, such a violent wind and gale blew up from the west that nearly all of our banners, save that of

339 Thuróczy, ut supra.
340 Dąbrowski, p. 184.

Saint George, were broken and torn down to the pole." Pallatio took this as an ill auspice for the battle to come.

As mentioned above, the crusaders hoped to defeat the basic Ottoman strategy of outflanking and encircling their enemy, a strategy all the more feasible due to the Ottoman superiority in numbers, by setting up their line with the natural barriers of the lake and swamp protecting their left flank, and the steep hillside covered with brambles and thickets to their right. This, they assumed, would funnel the Ottomans into the plain, thereby negating their numerical advantage. In a daring move, the Ottomans actually brought their left flank (the Army of Rumelia) into position by marching down the steep hillside. This was risky, since it made it difficult for the Ottoman cavalry to accomplish a tactical retreat, a maneuver they were quite skilled at, since units moving up the hillside would be forced to move in columns up the cart paths or as individuals. Yet it allowed them to outflank the crusaders on the crusader right flank. If they were able to roll up this flank on their initial assault, they could encircle half the army. The same was not true for the Army of Anatolia on the left. The lake, unlike the steep hillside, was not traversable. Nor was the swampy region bisected by the Devnia river to its east. These troops were forced to attack across the plain.

As both sides faced each other the commanders and sovereigns offered final words of encouragement to their men. The battle began as azabs marched forward to harry the enemy troops with bowshot. The cavalry on the crusader left responded by marching forward and the Ottoman right began to advance as well.[341] Soon after, the two lines met. The Transylvanians, among them the heavily-armored Saxon knights, attacked Isa Bey, whose troops opened a gap in the formation to allow the Transylvanian cavalry to enter and envelop them.[342] Ibn Fenari marched against Thomas Székely and the Szekeler cavalry. Further down the line Michael Szilágyi, who led the largest contingent on the crusader left, comprised of

[341] The main sources for this initial engagement are Zaifi and the Gazavât. Most of the Christian sources were written from the perspective of what was occurring on the Christian right. Wavrin, though he writes of an assault on Karaca Bey, is in fact referring to the attack against Şehabeddin Pasha on the right flank which is obvious from the terrain description he gives. The same is true of Beheim. Pallatio, who was himself present on the right flank, likewise only describes the battle from this perspective.

[342] Though Zaifi states that Isa Bey was on the Ottoman right, he does not state on the far right, and his position in the formation is not entirely clear. My judgment in this respect is drawn from the nature of Isa Bey's troops, i.e. light cavalry ideally suited for encirclement, and the fact that the other commanders are listed as being nearer to Karaca Bey.

his own men plus Hunyadi's banderium, moved to engage Karaca Bey. Mircea II and the Wallachians, in order to prevent Süleyman Bey, stationed on Karaca Bey's left, from outflanking Michael Szilágyi, broke from the crusader right and engaged Suleyman Bey's men directly.[343] The din of the fighting was amazing: "You could hear both sides playing instruments. Numerous trumpets resounded among the Christians. At the same time, in the Turkish army you could hear the kettle-drums being beaten furiously and thundering in the distance. There was a great clamor. You could hear stabbing and, above all, blows ringing out from both the armies, as they furiously attacked one another."[344]

While the Anatolian cavalry was engaged on the crusader left, the Ottomans focused their effort on assaulting the Christian right flank.[345] First the Rumelian azabs were sent down from the hilltop as skirmishers, firing arrows into the ranks of the crusader knights below. Then the Army of Rumelia was set in motion under Şehabeddin Pasha. All four Ottoman commanders on the right flank: Şehabeddin, Hızır Bey, Malkoçoğlu and Davud Bey advanced simultaneously. Then Şehabeddin Pasha attacked the two royal banderia, driving "forward the seven ranks [of Ottoman cavalry]. These, it is true, did not take flight from the infidels, but the infidels who are as low as the dust had come clad from head to toe in iron. However hard the warriors struck with their swords, it made no impression on the infidels who are as low as the dust. When the warriors of Islam saw this, they all took up axes, maces, clubs and battered the infidels with zeal and heroism. For a time, it was such that father could not recognize son, nor son father."[346]

Further down the line, on the Christian far right, the Turks had greater success. Davud Bey charged into the far end of the crusader right flank. "With the shock of his cavalry, he struck the infidel ranks and drove them

[343] This is reported in the Gazavât, who says that "the son of Dracul" attacked Suleyman Bey, who was positioned next to Karaca Bey. The only reason to pull Mircea from his position on the right is if Szilágyi were in danger of being outflanked, which is quite plausible given Suleyman's position relative to Karaca Bey and the fact that Szilágyi was attacking the latter. If we accept this account, it helps explain the reports in some Christian sources that the Wallachians broke ranks and fled upon the initial engagement with the enemy. They were not fleeing, but likely following orders from Hunyadi, stationed right beside them with the second battalion of royal troops. The problem, of course, was that this left the right flank weakened.

[344] Beheim, ut supra.

[345] The battle on the right flank is well narrated by Pallatio.

[346] Gazavât, ut supra.

into one another."[347] The first four banners from the right of the Christian line under John de Dominis, Cardinal Cesarini, Frank Thalloci and the Bishop of Eger broke under the pressure of Davud Bey's charge and fled south in the direction of the lake, the bay and Galata fortress.

> Of these four banners the banner of Saint Ladislas remained erect and intact, although nearly all of the soldiers had fled. The legate (Cesarini) and the Ban Franko (Thalloci) declined to flee and rallied to the banner with hardly 200 knights. Part indeed of the Turks cut down and slew the Hungarians dispersed here and there and some of them overturned the wagons and plundered them. Still others surrounded the banner of Saint Ladislas and assaulted it in earnest. But beneath it were stouthearted knights, and they aligned themselves tightly together in a circle with spears pointed outward at the Turks. Although as far as I could judge there were more than three thousand Turks, they were not able to separate the men from one another nor to overcome them.[348]

Davud Bey moved to encircle the army and succeeded in breaking through a number of the wagons. These provided enough of a hindrance, however, to keep him from accomplishing his goal quickly enough. Hunyadi, seeing the desperate situation on the right, led a portion of the royal troops held in the center as a reserve to assist, unwilling to commit the entire reserve since the fighting on the crusader left had not yet been decided. This only provided momentary relief, for while engaging Davud Bey Hunyadi was driven back by a counterattack from a certain Yunus Bey[349] and he returned to his position by the side of the king.

On the crusader left (Ottoman right) the battle was tilting decisively in the crusaders' favor. If Isa Bey's retreat had been a feigned one, it failed to achieve the desired objective. The Transylvanians and the rest of the crusader left flank continued to drive back the enemy. The troops of Anatolia began to break off and flee towards the hills. Seeing that his lines were collapsing Karaca Bey, refusing to run, instead spurred himself forward along with whatever men he had left with him in a final charge into the ranks of Thomas Székely.[350] Though a heroic gesture, it was to no avail,

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347 Gazavât, ut supra. The Gazavât states that Davud Bey, Malkochoğlu and Hizir Bey had initially taken flight, regrouped, and then attacked. However, Pallatio says that the crusaders broke under the initial assault, as does Zaifi. What we may be seeing here is some of the Gazavât author's bias against the soldiers of the marches, to include the akinji who comprised the majority of Davud Bey's volunteers from the levy.

348 Pallatio, ut supra.

349 Zaifi, ut supra.

350 This is based on the passage in the Gazavât which states that Karaca, when his forces had fled, attacked "Jupan Thomas."

and the beylerbey was killed by the sword of one of the crusaders.[351] Karaca Bey's death and the flight of the Army of Anatolia was a significant point in the battle. For with the conflict on the Chrıstıan left decided, Hunyadi could now use those troops to assist the right flank, the remnants of which were hard pressed by Şehabeddin, Davud Bey and the Rumelians. "If we can move their left wing even a little bit out of position, you can be sure that all of the son of Osman's army will be defeated,"[352] Hunyadi is purported to have said to Wladislas in reference to the Ottoman left flank.

Phase Two

Şehabeddin and the Rumelians began to break under the pressure of Hunyadi's troops from the crusader left flank now working in combination with the remaining troops of the crusader right flank. "The ground was torn up like cotton. [The Ottomans] fought furiously, but the cowards in their midst began to flee towards the mountains in groups. When Shahin (Şehabeddin) Pasha saw this, he placed the soldiers from the general levy and his own azabs in front. The worthy among the Rumelians stood by them and continued to fight more fiercely than can be described."[353] The crusaders, however, had seized back the initiative on the right flank as the king tore into their ranks like "a new Caesar."[354] Hunyadi and the king joined ranks and began to push the Rumelians back up the slope of the valley:

> The indomitable king, pursuing the Turks for nearly four miles,[355] inflicted such casualties and loss upon them that it is incredible to hear of it. Whosoever saw it was amazed and dumbfounded that there was such vigor and life in this prince. Afterwards he returned to the place from which he had departed to battle against the remiander of the enemy. After he saw that the banner of Saint Ladislas was under assault by the Turks and subject to great danger, moved by piety he rode forward to liberate us. After the Turks recognized it was the king, they turned and fled. We too began to pursue

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[351] The sources are unanimous in reporting Karaca Bey's death and that it was a significant blow to the Ottoman army.

[352] Gazavât, ut supra. The Gazavât suggests that Hunyadi alone brought his troops to bear against Şehabeddin, and that he ordered the king to stay put. Pallatio, however, makes it clear that both the king's and Hunyadi's men assaulted the Rumelian army.

[353] Gazavât, ut supra.

[354] Pallatio, ut supra.

[355] This is likely an exaggeration. He and Hunyadi more than likely merely pursued the Turks as far as the imperial camp and then returned. To pursue any further, as Hunyadi well knew, might give the Turks the opportunity to encircle them.

> them along with the king and whomever we came upon we put to death, so that around three thousand Turks fell in this place and were wiped out in one moment alone.[356]

Yet Pallatio notes that despite these losses it seemed as if they had hardly inflicted any casualties upon the Turks. From the beginning of the fight the Ottomans outnumbered the crusaders three to one. Murad's own infantry, the janissaries and imperial azabs, had not yet entered the fight. With the Anatolian forces in retreat and the Rumelians beginning to break in groups fleeing towards the hills, Murad released his men.[357] Hunyadi, who had fought and pursued a group of routed Turks, returned to the side of the king and the safe-haven of the wagons, from behind which the crusaders worked quickly to reorganize themselves.[358] Many of the men on the crusader left flank—save the Wallachians, who, having routed the "Albanians,"[359] gave themselves over to plunder—could now rejoin the remainder of the army. Still, as Pallatio notes, the men were exhausted. They had been fighting the length of the day. Many were wounded and battered, including Hunyadi, who had been struck in the helm by a Turkish arrow.[360] Now they were faced with fresh enemy battalions comprised of the best-trained and best-equipped soldiers in the Ottoman army.

The janissaries and imperial azabs, numbering between six and eight thousand infantry total, descended part way down the slope, lodging themselves amidst the thickets on the hillside, showering the crusaders with arrows. Both sides then advanced on one another. The fighting at this point reached a feverish pitch and neither side could gain ground, despite the fact that the disparity in numbers no longer favored the Turks as much as at the onset of the battle. Pallatio states that the king, in an attempt to break through to Hunyadi, had to fight his way through a number of enemy battalions, "among them a certain battalion of elect Tartar troops engaged the king and fought ably."[361] This was undoubtedly the

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356 Pallatio, ut supra.

357 Beheim, Gazavât, Pallatio, ut supra.

358 Beheim, ut supra.

359 Chalkokondyles, ut supra. This term could refer to Isa Bey Evrenosoğlu, who likely had a number of Albanians under his command. According to the Gazavât, the Wallachians were convinced to join the Sultan on threat of killing Mircea's two brothers.

360 Gazavât, ut supra. According to the Gazavât the arrow struck him in the eye (though Hunyadi was certainly wearing a helmet, a fact noted by the Turks who depict him as "encased in armor") and knocked from his horse with such force that he had to move briefly to the rear to get bandaged.

361 Pallatio, p. 466. See chapter four for a description of these troops.

ğarıp yiğitler, one of the six battalions of the sultan's slave cavalry who were now involved in the fight as well. Despite their successes, the crusader force was much reduced, having lost the four banderia on the right flank, as well as the considerable losses the enemy had inflicted throughout the day on the rest of the army.[362] At this point their numbers were likely between six and seven thousand men. Yet the entire Ottoman right flank had been routed and decimated in retreat, and the majority of the Ottoman left was now in flight as well. Some of these men, such as Davud Bey and Şehabeddin Pasha, would retreat back to the sultan's camp with their personal retinues.[363] Yet the majority of the provincial cavalry had either fled far from the battlefield or lay dead upon it.[364]

The azabs, and in particular the janissaries, were well-armed and excellently trained, proving themselves a strong match against the crusader cavalry and the Bohemian infantry manning the wagons. Yet as the afternoon began to wane many of the janissaries and azabs, "particularly the novices among them," as well as the remainder of the Rumelian cavalry began to break and flee.[365] The same was true of many of the crusaders, whose horses alone could no longer sustain the continual effort of fighting and the constant pressure of the enemy.[366] Despite their fatigue the crusader line had succeeded in driving the janissaries and azabs back up the hillside. The vast majority of the Ottoman Army had fled the battle or was dead,[367] and Murad himself sought refuge in his fortified encampment in the rear. Sensing that they might tip the battle in their favor through decisive action, and in the process win great glory for themselves, the king and several hundred handpicked royal troops, upon the advice of the Hungarian barons and despite the contrary advice of Hunyadi, made their fateful decision to charge at Murad's camp and finish the battle once and for all.[368]

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362 Pallatio, ut supra: "Adde, quod ex nostris eciam plurimi ceciderunt."

363 Gazavât, ut supra.

364 Pallatio, ut supra, writes that the battlefield was strewn with Turkish corpses for several miles.

365 Gazavât, ut supra. Zaifi, ut supra.

366 Pallatio, ut supra: "Quidam autem ab exercitu regis tum pusillanimitate ducti tum equorum suorum viribus diffidentes, relicto in prelio rege ad desertum per silvas et montes aufugerunt."

367 Though the Gazavât simply states that a large number of them had fled, Zaifi says it was the majority.

368 For a description of Wladislas' charge see the introduction.

Phase Three

As narrated in the introduction, the king's desperate gamble did not pay off but ultimately cost the crusaders their victory. In the short term, Wladislas' death seemed to have little effect. Few men had been able see the fate of the king once he and his men charged the sultan's camp, and virtually no one returned from that assault to report what had happened.[369] Many still believed the king was alive, and would arrive back in camp later that night. The two sides continued to engage one another along the line. "The Hungarians and Poles continued, until the night became pitch black, to fight so hard it was unclear which side could claim victory. First one side fled and then the other, believing each other to be defeated. Here a hundred reassembled and there two hundred, here thirty and there forty."[370]

A large contingent of the crusader knights who had been pursuing the enemy and were unaware that Wladislas had been killed returned to the plain where the battle had been fought to seek shelter in the tabor.[371] The wagons had been drawn up in their typical closed formation so as to provide maximum defense in case the Turks might attempt an assault at night or in the early morning. As Thuróczy writes:

> When night came, following immediately after so unhappy a day, and covered the whole world with shadows, those who, on both sides, had not yet fled their camps, kept vigils in them through the night until the dawn of the following day. They could hear, from among the corpses with which all the surrounding battlefield was littered, the cries and wailing of the countless men who had been cut down and could neither die nor live, and they themselves in their stupor scarcely hoped to see the light of day.[372]

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[369] Pallatio, ut supra. For these reasons (and others) men who had been present at the battle such as Pallatio continued to assume even as late as May 1445 that the king had routed the Turks guarding the sultan's camp and even killed Murad himself! The fact that he included this in his account written in May of 1445 shows just how long these rumors persisted. Wavrin (p. 133) had been able to interview some of the participants of the battle, who were likely the main source for his account, later on in Constantinople. These war captives had been purchased by the Genoese in the slave markets of Edirne. Wavrin himself notes that these men gave conflicting accounts of the battle and were unable to answer regarding the fate of Cesarini or the king. He later transported these redeemed captives back to Hungary on one of his vessels, where he no doubt had more time to hear their stories of this, and perhaps other campaigns.

[370] Wavrin, ut supra.

[371] Thuróczy, p. 144.

[372] Thuróczy, ut supra.

The soldiers who had fled south towards the lake early during the first phase of the battle now made their way back north under cover of darkness in an attempt to escape over the hills. The men in the tabor could hear them passing by and encouraged them to seek shelter among the wagons. The stragglers refused and continued to head north, fearing that the Turks were watching and guarding the tabor,[373] which indeed they were.[374] Despite this, according to Pallatio, the men in the tabor passed a peaceful night under the impression that the king had vanquished the sultan.

Hunyadi, upon hearing of the king's death, continued the fight until sunset.[375] He then broke through and fled north into the mountains, trying to reassemble as many men as possible along the way.[376] Many of the fleeing crusader troops refused to heed the summons and instead made their way to a ravine "that was so steep and overgrown that any horse that had wanted to go over it would slip and fall on its backside." Either that night or the next morning the Ottoman cavalry[377] caught up with these men and killed so many of them that the ravine filled with bodies, so much so that the horses were now able to cross. According to Beheim thousands of men were killed in the ditch and an equal number captured.[378]

The death of Wladislas was more well-known to the Ottomans than the crusaders. It had an immediate effect on their morale. The king's head, affixed to the top of a lance, was displayed throughout the camp

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373 Pallatio, ut supra.

374 Gazavât, ut supra.

375 The Anonymous Chronicle (ut supra) states that Hunyadi heard the news of the king's demise and stated: "'We came for the sake of our religion, not for the sake of the king.' He then launched several more attacks and then, seeing that the sultan's army was beginning to reassemble, he fled the field." Długosz has Hunyadi fleeing early on, but this is part of Długosz' own historical agenda and should not be accepted as fact. For more inormation see Nikodem, "Długosz i Kallimach."

376 Oruç Bey (p. 68) and Pallatio both mention Hunyadi's flight. Oruç Bey connects it with hearing news of the king's death.

377 Perhaps the men of Şehabeddin Pasha, who according to the Gazavât were in the pursuit of the fleeing crusaders that night and the next day.

378 Beheim gives a lengthy description of this episode, and it is reasonable to assume that Hans Maugest, who had provided the text for Beheim's poem, was captured here. This would explain why he makes very scant mention of the operations of the next day, i.e. the face-off at the tabor, etc., an event which is reported independently in Pallatio, the Gazavât and Oruç Bey. He says that 3,000 men were killed and 3,000 captured. This would yield a total of 6,000 men, which seems somewhat exaggerated given that Hunyadi had successfully retreated with a large body of men, and there was a still a sizeable force with the wagons.

with the words: "They have cut off the king's head and stuck it on a lance!"[379] Hearing this news a number of the cavalrymen and others who had retreated returned that night and the next morning to rally around the sultan's camp. Yet much of the Ottoman army remained scattered. As daylight came Murad sent out one of his men to find Şehabeddin and bring him back to the main army. The beylerbey had been pursuing the fleeing crusaders, and his return to the camp gladdened Murad. Among the others who had made it back were Ishakbeyoğlu Isa Bey, Davud Bey and of course Dayı Karaca Bey, whose encouragement had kept Murad from fleeing Wladislas' charge.

The Ottomans could hear activity in the wagenburg and they sent out men to surround and watch over the tabor, wary that the remainder of the crusader army might come back to the wagons or to the king's camp. Within the tabor the men were still waiting for the return of their king and/or Hunyadi. As the day wore on it became increasingly clear that these latter had either retreated or were dead. To dispel any further doubt the Turks displayed the head of the fallen sovereign.[380] The stand-off lasted until evening.[381] At that point, the Ottomans drew up their forces and sent them forward to overtake the tabor.[382]

> Advancing at a slow pace they gradually approached the Hungarian camp and careful investigated whether it was full of troops. When they became aware of the faint murmuring of men's voices therein and observed that no one was showing signs of taking up arms or was rushing forth on to the battlefield to wage war, all the infantry of the sultan's expedition charged the camp and immediately smashed and knocked down its tents, since no

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379 Anonymous Chronicle, ut supra.

380 Zaifi, ut supra.

381 Pallatio, ut supra.

382 A number of important Ottoman sources say that the tabor in fact surrendered. Among these are the Gazavât and Kashifi. This may be a misplaced reference to the Second Battle of Kosovo. The Anonymous chronicle and Oruç Bey both say that that the tabor was attacked and overrun. Pallatio's narrative would also seem to suggest that the wagons were invaded. He writes that the Turks "did not dare invade the tabor the following day until evening came." But the most reasonable description seems to be provided by Thuróczy. It is hard to imagine that the Turks would have overrun the tabor if it were indeed well-manned and prepared for combat. As Thuróczy writes, and Pallatio confirms, the Turks were at first cautious, and then assaulted the tabor full on when they realized it was hardly manned. Beheim does seem to mention some sort of an attack on the wagenburg, but his account at this point in the battle is so inconsistent with the others (i.e. he writes that it took place on the eve prior, the wagons were not seized but the crusaders were able to fight their way out, etc.) that it is difficult to rely on.

> one was taking any action at all to defend it. All those found alive were either taken prisoner or put to death.[383]

With this last remnant of potential resistance crushed the battle was over. The next morning, after prayer, Murad asked to be led to the battlefield. The light of dawn revealed hills and valleys strewn with the mutilated corpses of men and horses, felled standards and overturned carts. From there Murad "proceeded to the camp of the infidels who are as low as the dust, and looked around until he came to the king's tent. He went inside, and drove his sword into the king's throne and sat down, giving praise and thanks for the favor and guidance of God."[384] Murad had the choicest plunder set aside as a gift for his son Mehmet. He then released the prisoners the crusaders had taken throughout the length of their campaign, and bestowed gifts upon them such that "he endowed those indigents with so many gold coins that, although they needed no more than a scrap each, they all became rich and free from want."[385]

The Ottomans did not have the strength or men to pursue the Christians that had fled north.[386] The arid land, lack of supplies, thirst and exhaustion took their own toll on the retreating army. As Pallatio, who was among those men retreating north, wrote:

> The voivode Hunyadi, who had Wallachian guides, made it in two days and nights to the Danube and at the Delaslatocz[387] pass crossed over into Wallachia. Certain others made it in three, others in four, others in five days and nights neither eating nor drinking nor sleeping, whereas it would have normally taken eight or ten days to cross this desert... Those who lacked Wallachian guides either wandered to places where the Turks were, thinking they were Christians, or they at last perished from the cold or the wandering or the hunger. Many more of our men died from hunger, cold and a lack of food than from the Turkish sword. Had they wanted to pursue the fleeing Christians, either all of our men would have perished in the desert or when they made it to the Danube they would have drowned us in the river.[388]

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383 Thuróczy, ut supra. Gazavât (ut supra) likewise reports that all the "fresh-faced" young men in the tabor were taken prisoner, whereas the adults were put to death.

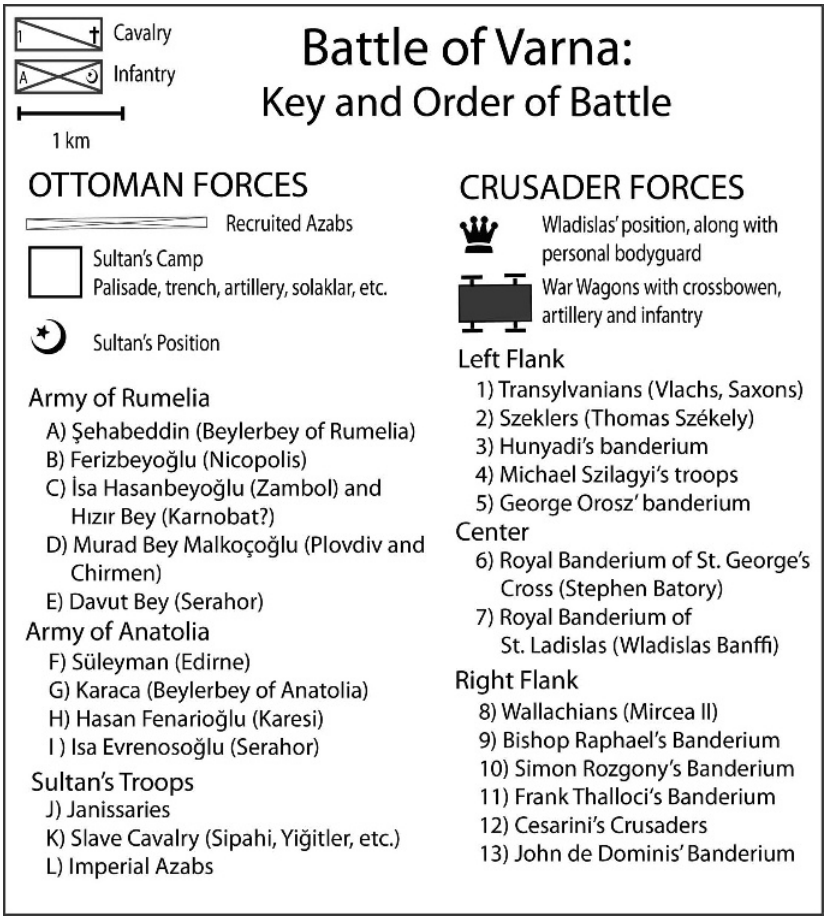
384 Gazavât, ut supra.

385 Gazavât, ut supra.

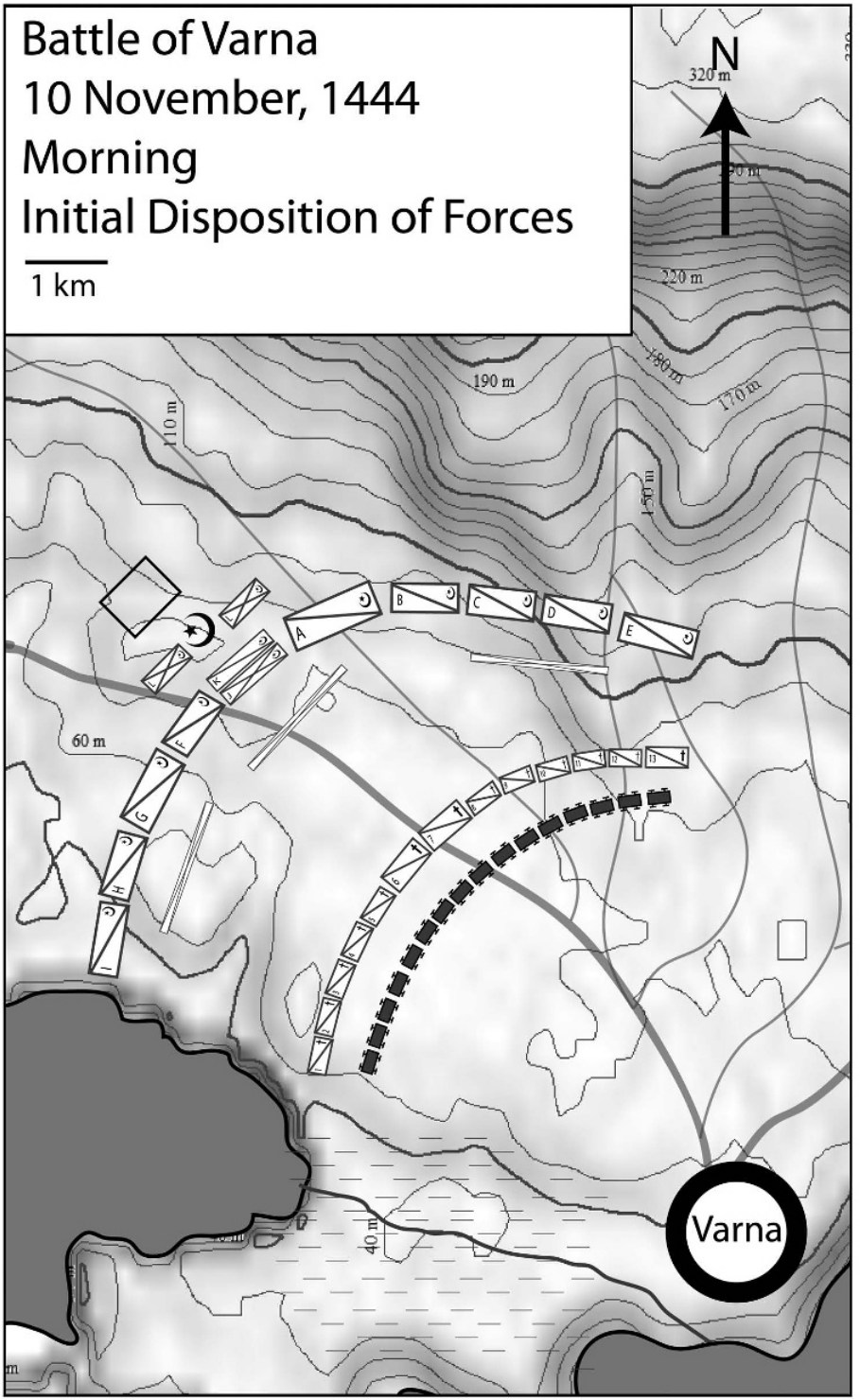
386 Gazavât (ut supra) has Murad giving orders to halt the pursuit, saying it was of no great concern if a few men succeeded in escaping; Pallatio (ut supra) even cited the absence of a pursuing army as proof that the sultan had been killed in the fight.

387 The location of this pass is uncertain.

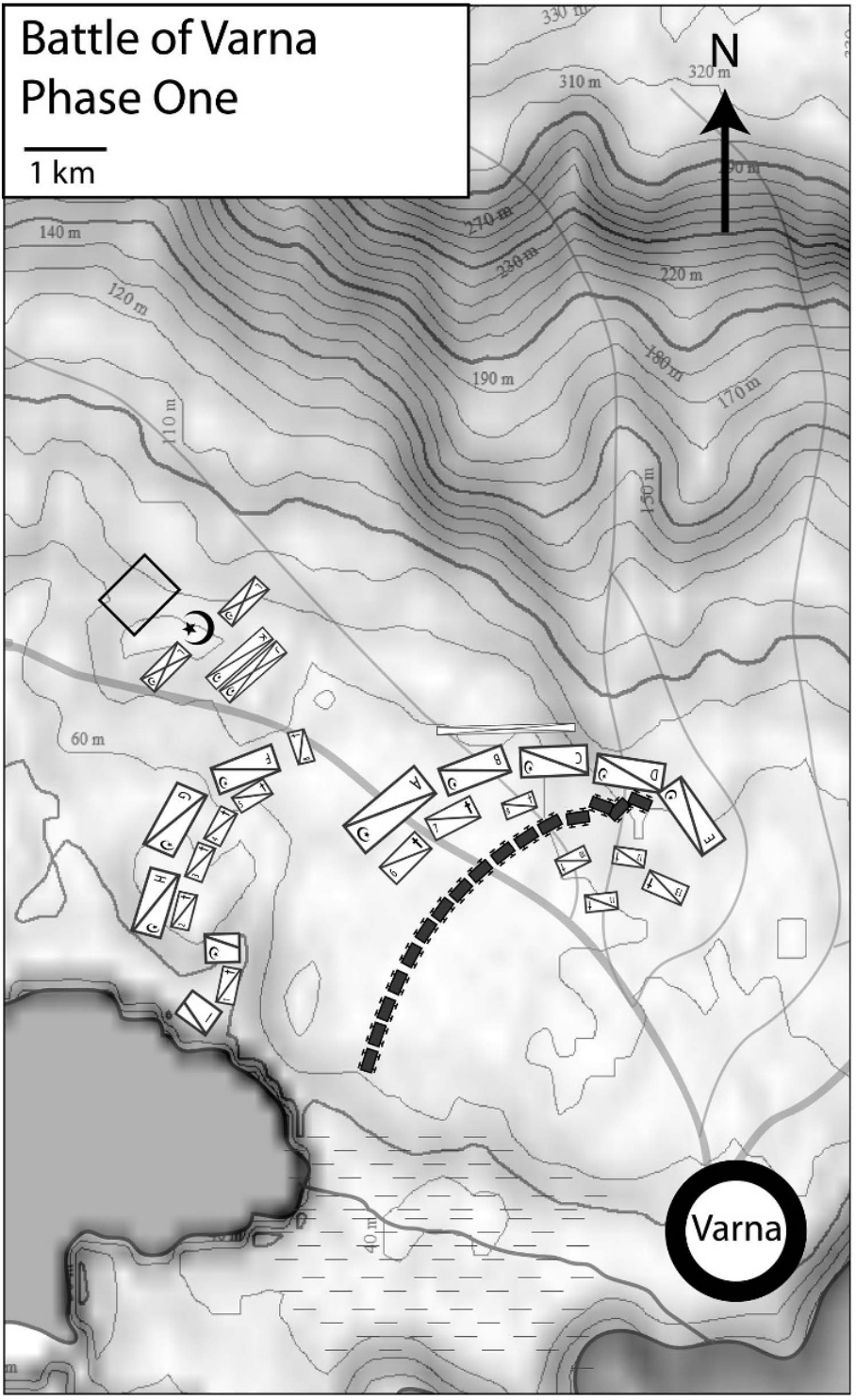
388 Pallatio, ut supra.



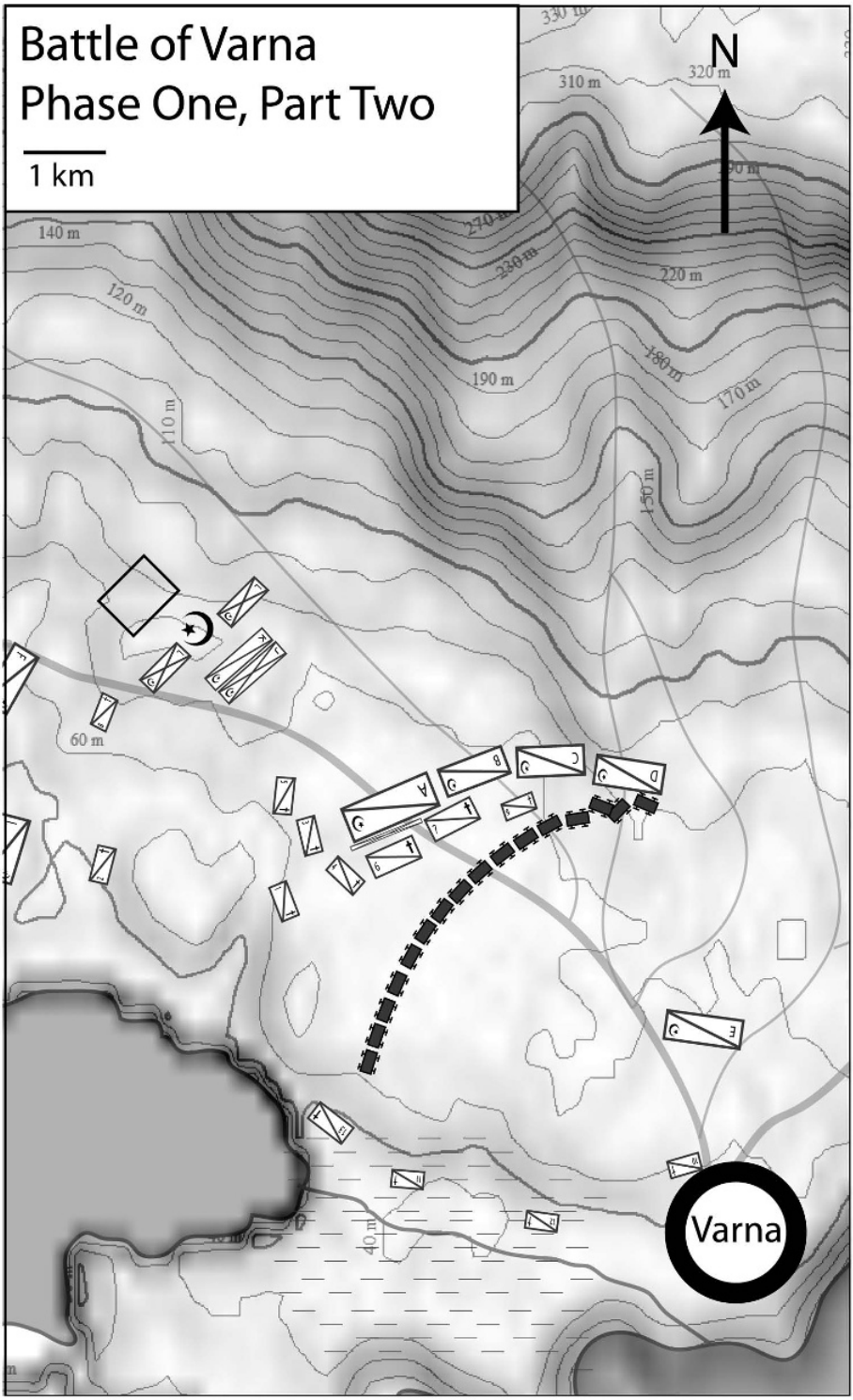
Map 9. Battle of Varna.



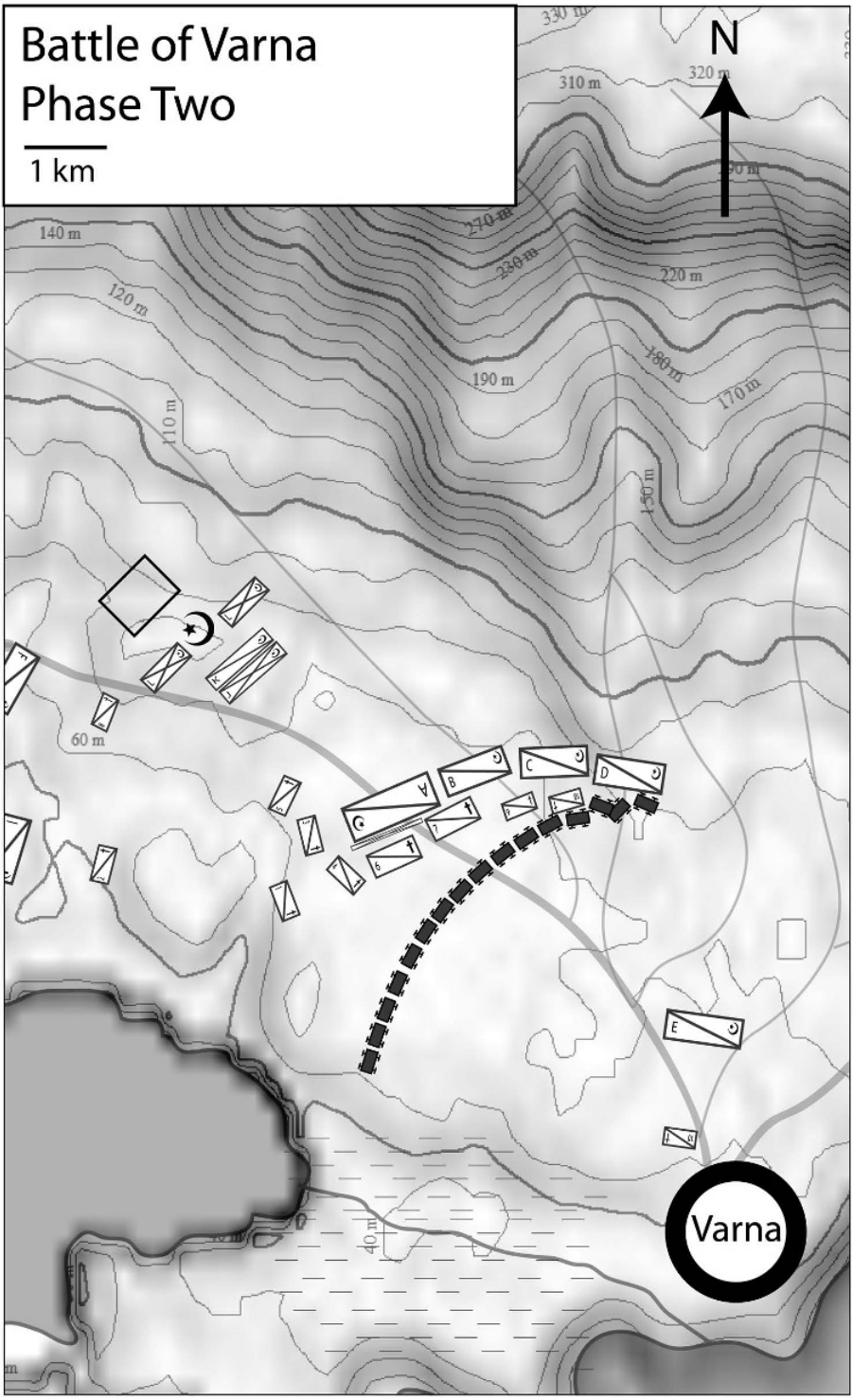
Map 10. Battle of Varna, initial disposition of forces.



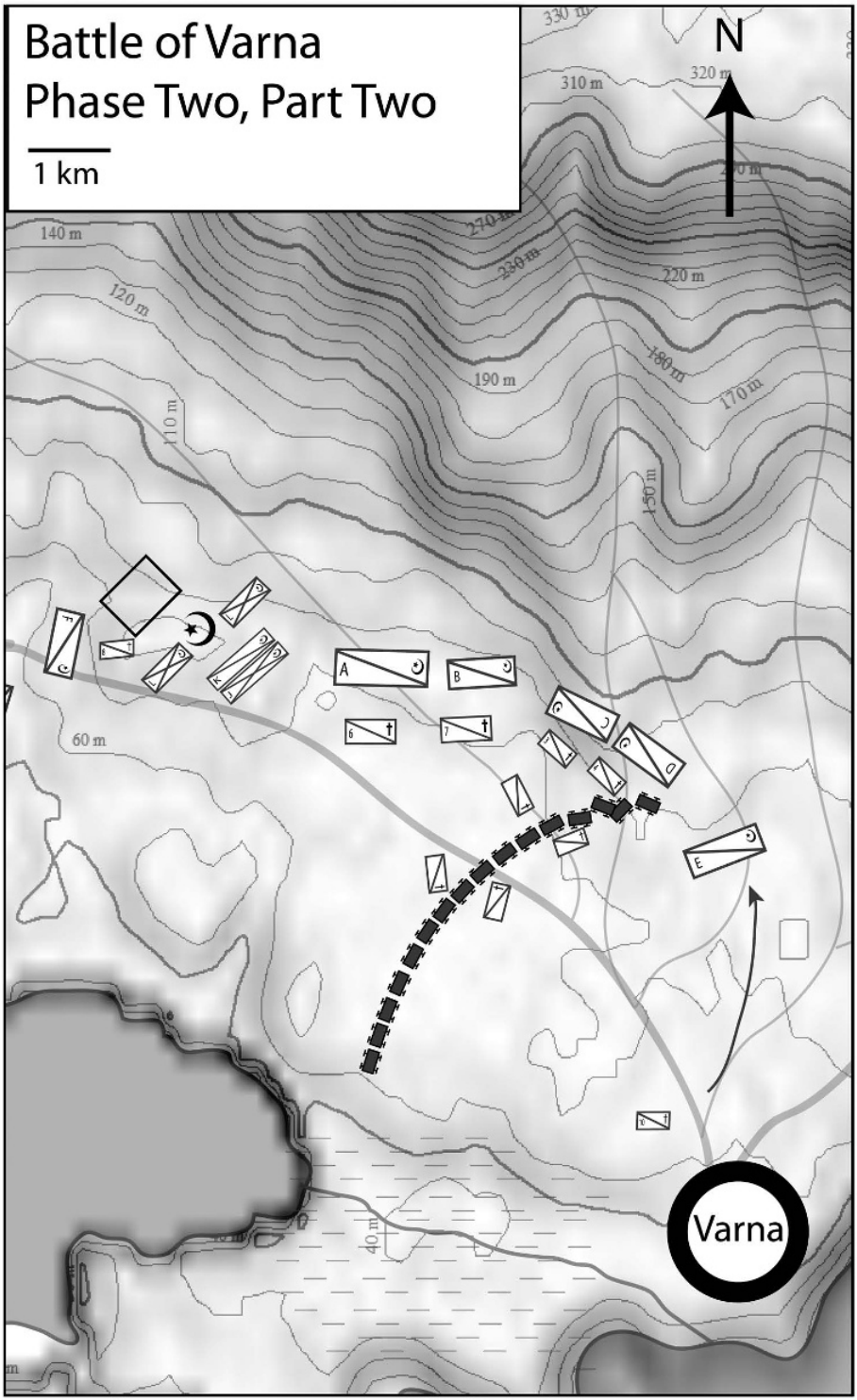
Map 11. Battle of Varna, Phase One.



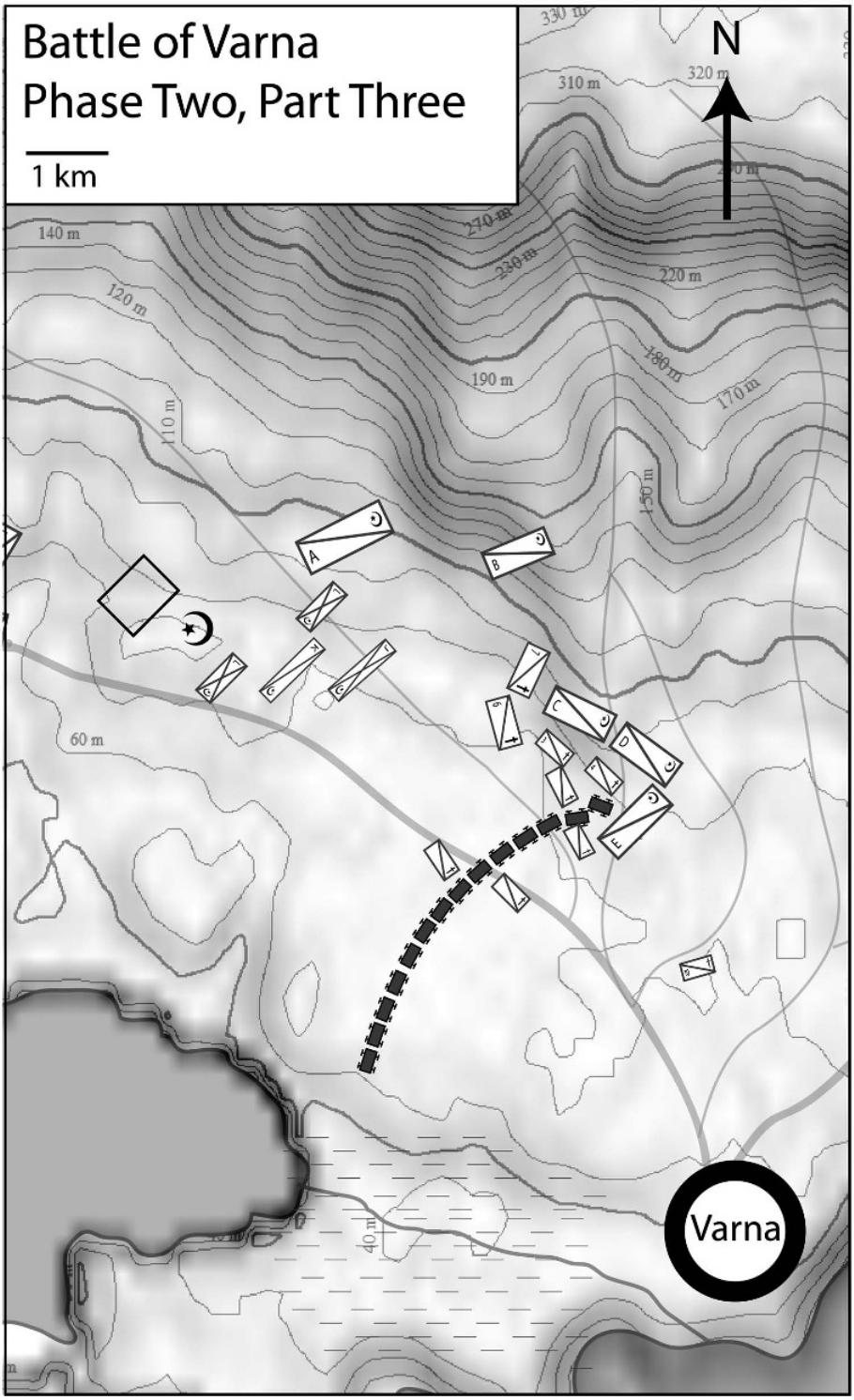
Map 12. Battle of Varna, Phase One, Part Two.



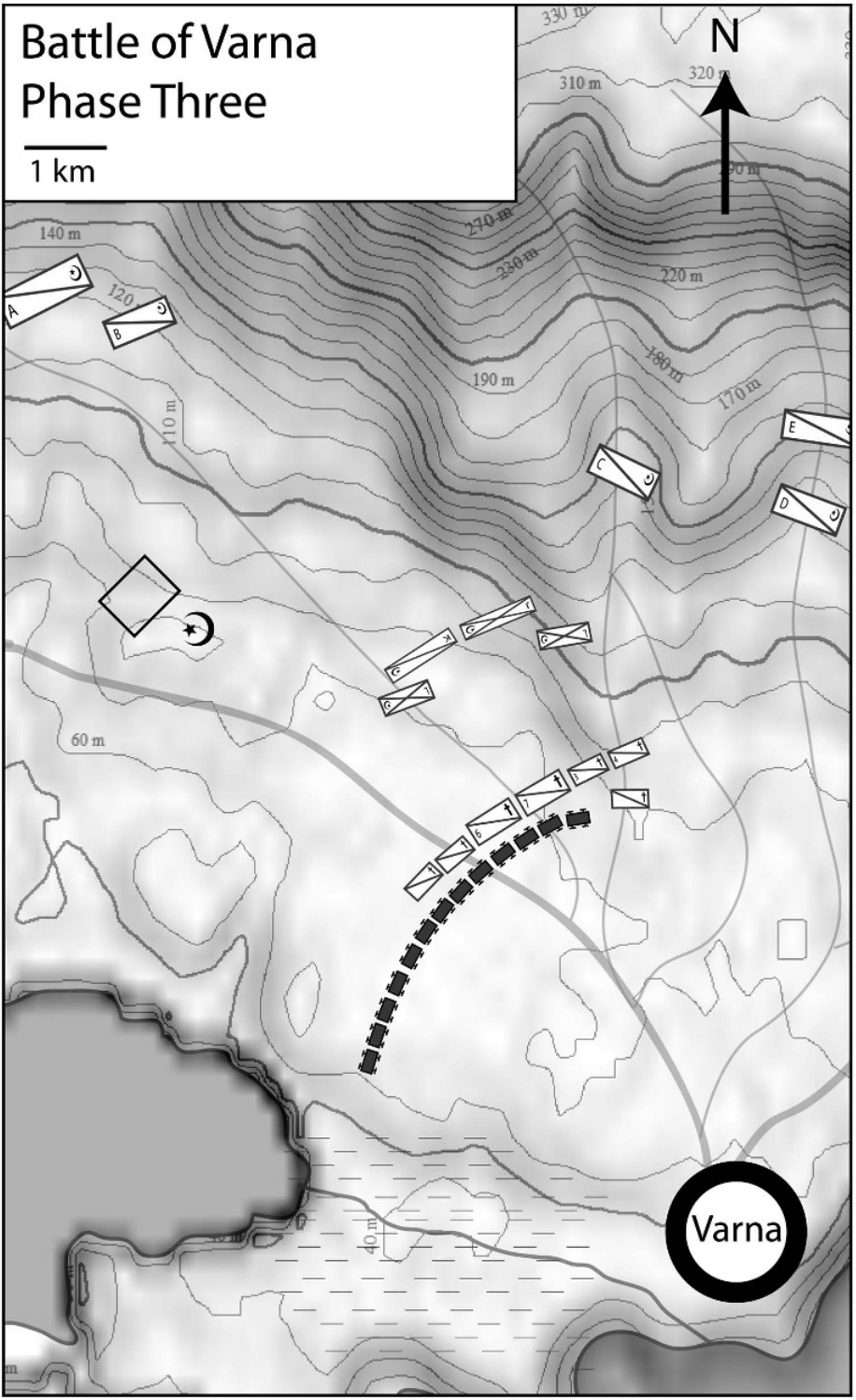
Map 13. Battle of Varna, Phase Two.



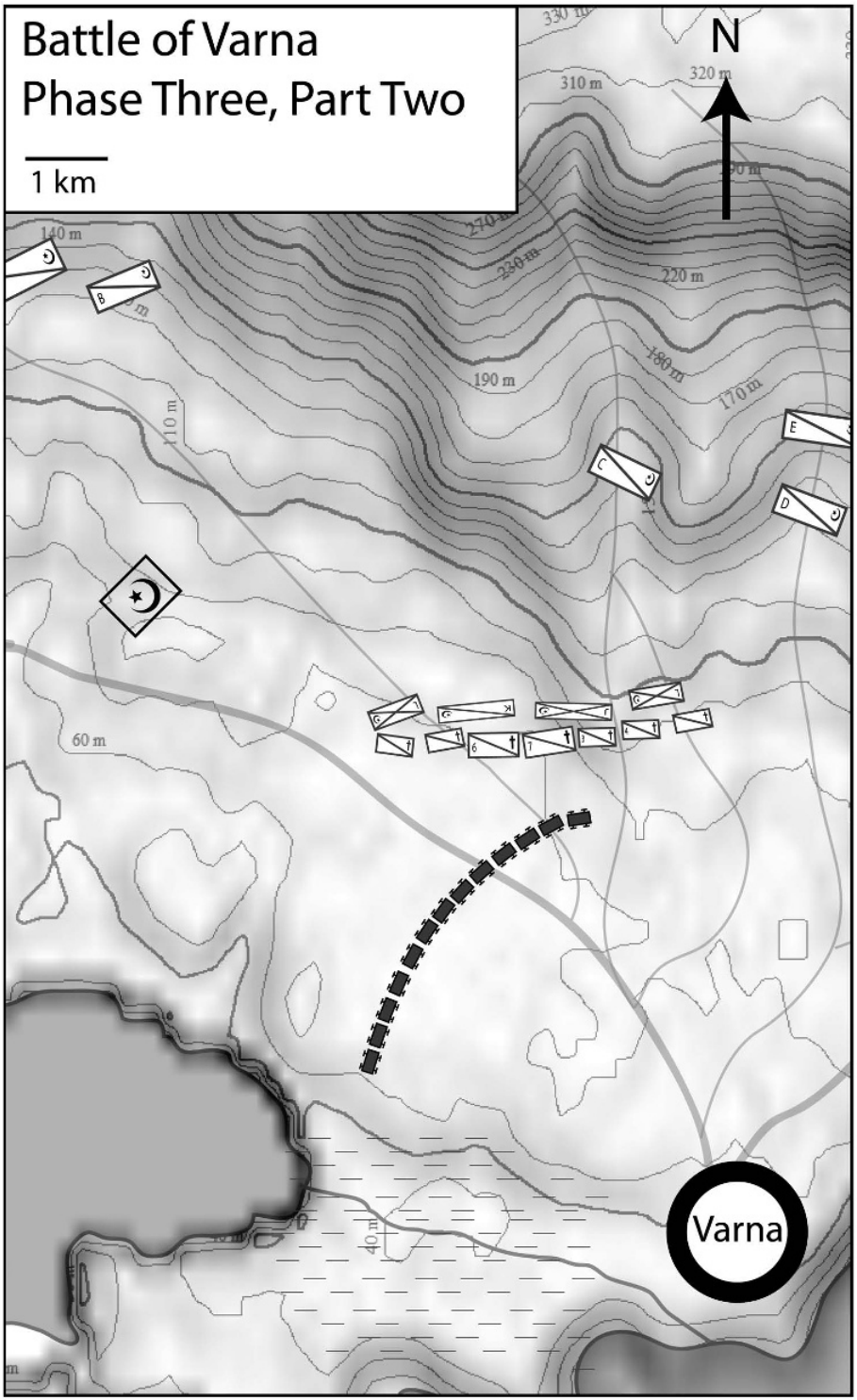
Map 14. Battle of Varna, Phase Two, Part Two.



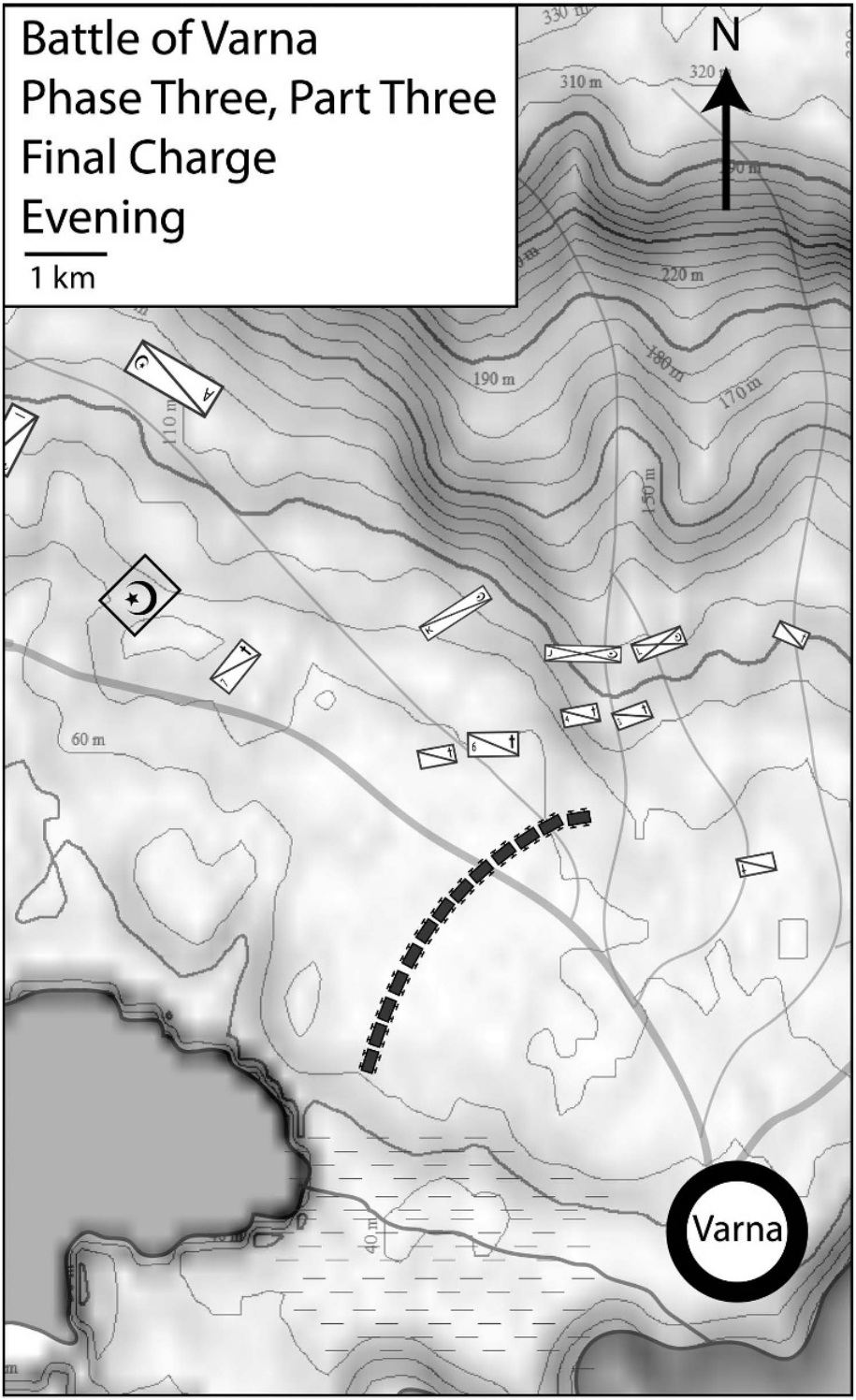
Map 15. Battle of Varna, Phase Two, Part Three.



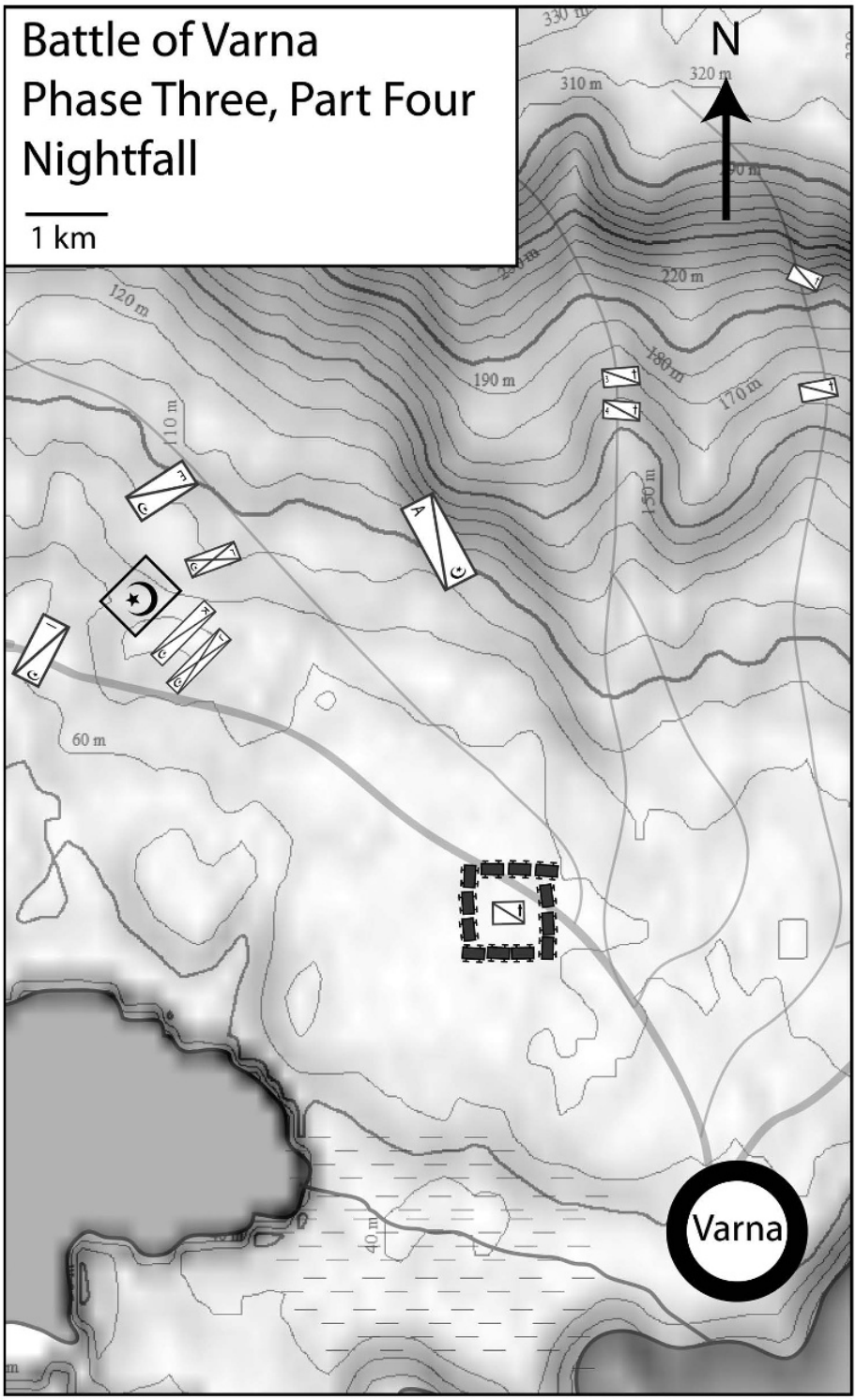
Map 16. Battle of Varna, Phase Three.



Map 17. Battle of Varna, Phase Three, Part Two.



Map 18. Battle of Varna, Phase Three, Part Three.



Map 19 Battle of Varna, Phase Three, Part Four.

Aftermath

That night the sultan moved to Varna proper and he and his men resided there for a couple more days. They then began their triumphant march back to Edirne. Upon entering the city, the Gazavât tells us, an animal was slaughtered in praise for the victory with every step the sultan took until he mounted his throne. Messengers had been dispatched immediately to inform Mehmet and the Porte of the outcome. Their joy and relief upon hearing the news was inexpressible. Just the previous day troops who had fled the battle during its initial phases had brought reports that the sultan was defeated. This had caused a great panic in Edirne, and the city notables had left to the fortress at Dimetoka to take shelter there.[389] Informed that the opposite was true, that the Ottomans were victorious, it was decided that "all the community of Muhammad should be informed. Let there be great illuminations and celebrations so that all the community of Muhammad can rejoice, and the infidel who are as low as the dust suffer grief and foreboding when they hear of it."[390]

The letters published to announce the victory were the so-called Fethname, of which three are still extant.[391] They relate the sultan's triumph in poetic but assertive terms, and were meant to promote Murad's role as the foremost warrior of the faith in the Muslim community. Along with these letters the Ottomans sent ten captured knights, mounted and in full armor, to the sons of Kara Yusuf of the Akkoyunlu federation, to Shah Rukh, son of Tamerlane, to Iskender Bey of the Karakoyunlu, to Ibrahim Bey of Karaman and to Jakmak the Mameluke Sultan in Cairo.[392] Al-Sakhawi, a chronicler in Cairo at the time, records the spectacle of their arrival:

> On 11 Dhu'l-Hijja/22 March, a governor-general arrived from the said son of Osman, bringing with him a group of emirs and other men whom they had captured. There were sixteen of them, with cuirasses, vambraces and bowl-like helmets on their heads. They were immersed in iron and steel and riding on horseback, indicating that this was the state they had been in when they were captured. Their arrival occasioned a greater tumult than

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389 İnalcik, *Fatih Devri*, p. 75.

390 Gazavât, p. 70.

391 The one to Ibrahim Bey, to Shah Rukh and to Jakmak. See Erzi, pp. 612–616 for a fuller discussion of these Fethname.

392 Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 616) as well as the Mameluke chronicle of Al-Sakhawi (Imber's translation, p. 188).

> on the day of the mahmil,[393] because there was not a single man, woman or child who did not emerge to see them and enjoy the view... When the prisoners reached the sultan, he delivered them to the Amir Taghriberdi. Islam became pleasing to them, and they became Muslim. This happened at the beginning of the following year. The sultan divided them between the emirs, and they never stopped sending one thing after another to their homelands.[394]

The greatest trophy and most assertive testimony to Murad's victory was the head of the king. It was taken on a tour of the empire,[395] borne by a slave, who placed it in a honey jar to preserve it, and from which it was removed and cleansed before being placed on a spear and paraded around whatever city it was currently in, eventually being displayed in Bursa:

> Afterwards Sultan Murad sent the king's head to Bursa. At that time Cebe Ali was the Subashi of Bursa. He marched out with the people of the city to meet [those with] the king's head in Nilüfer (a district of Bursa). The king's head was placed into a jar and they poured honey over it. Thus sterilized its condition did not change. Afterwards the head was pulled out, rinsed in the waters of the Nilüfer, cleansed, and then afterwards it looked like a severed head again. Afterwards they took the head, placed it on a pole, saying, "The sultan has waged ghaza well." They moved the head from district to district with drums and tambour; they adorned the city with it. And they were exceedingly charitable towards the slave bringing the head.[396]

The victory at Varna had domestic ramifications as well as foreign. The many threats that had faced the Ottoman Empire in 1444 were averted by this one victory. Aside from the uprising in Albania, which would continue for some years under Iskender Bey, there were no major areas of conflict or upheaval remaining. A triumphant empire no longer needed a scapegoat and Turahan Bey was freed from prison. Within less than two years the marcher lord was leading his men against the despotate of the Morea, overrunning the Hexamilion once again and subjecting the most important cities and territories of the despotate to Ottoman rule. The greatest sign of the increased security brought about by the victory at Varna was Murad's decision to abdicate the throne once again to his son

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393 This was a "litter bearing the annual gift from the Mamluk Sultan to Mecca and Medina at the start of the annual pilgrimage" (Imber's translation, 188, footnote 24).

394 Imber's translation, p. 188.

395 Zaifi (Pehlivan, p. 616).

396 Neşri, pp. 653–655.

Mehmet, and retire himself to relative secluion in the Anatolian town of Manisa.[397]

Throughout Christendom conflicting reports began to circulate even before the battle had taken place. Unlike in 1443, there was no attempt on the king's or Hunyadi's part to update the courts of Europe on the campaign's progress.[398] The first rumors were positive, suggesting not only that Wladislas was alive and well but that the crusaders had inflicted a grave defeat on the Turks.[399] Though the latter notion was quickly dispelled by reports from those who had fled, the fate of the king was much harder to ascertain. Pallatio, who had been present at the battle, was still under the impression in the spring of 1445 that the king was alive. Such rumors were intentionally encouraged by Wladislas' adherents in Hungary, who even had letters forged in the king's name. In an attempt to stave off internal conflict unti Hunyadi's return they spread the rumor that the king was in Poland and raising a new army to fight the Ottomans. They realized that if the king were dead the boy-king Ladislas, currently under the tutelage of Frederick at the Habsburg court, would accede to the throne in Hungary. This only added to the confusion. There are even those today who refer to the conflicting reports and rumors to argue that Wladislas did not perish at Varna at all.[400]

It did not take long for news of the defeat to reach the crusader fleet. Some of the prisoners taken at Varna were redeemed by Genoese merchants. These same prisoners told the story of the battle to Wavrin and his men, who agreed to transport several of them back to Hungary, but their accounts were contradictory and did not help resolve the most pressing question as to whether or not Cesarini and the king were still alive. To settle this question the Turks sent for Loredano, and asked him to send a delegation to Gallipoli so that they might see the dead king's head. "The Turks displayed a man's head with long blonde hair in a box

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397 See İnalcik, *Fatih Devri*, p. 79. This second abdication did not last more than two years, when Murad was brought back after Halil Pasha fomented a janissary rebellion in order to create the proper pretext for the sultan's return.

398 See Grabski, *Polska w opiniach*, pp. 403–450, for a thorough and excellent discussion of the news about the battle and how it was received in the courts of Europe.

399 Grabski, p. 409. The Venetians received news of the "victory" on 20 November, and were not disavowed of this opinion until January of the following year.

400 The most famous among these is Leopold Kielanowski, who in a series of radio shows and in a book published in 1991 titled Odyseja Władysława Warneńczyka made the argument that after various peregrinations the king spent his last days in Portugal. A recently published book goes even a step further and says that Wladislas then fathered Christopher Columbus.

full of cotton. When they returned to their captain, they told him what had happened and what they had seen. At this point, several slaves said that they had seen the King of Hungary on many occasions and that he had black hair. As a result, no one had any idea what had become of the king."[401] This only added to the confusion, and Wavrin decided that he and his men would set out for the Black Sea coast and find out for themselves. They were accompanied by Cardinal Condulmer. The Venetians and Loredano decided to return home.

John VIII pleaded with Wavrin and his men to remain in the straits and help guard the city from what he believed would be an imminent Ottoman siege. Fear of reprisal had gripped the emperor the moment Murad succeeded in crossing.[402] In the end, Constantinople was able to avoid another siege until Murad's successor, Mehmet the Conqueror, finally succeeded to the throne in 1451 and took it upon himself to capture the city as soon as possible. On the one hand, the Ottoman army was depleted and exhausted after years of fighting and a number of defeats. Even the last battle at Varna was a Pyrrhic victory, with the Ottomans suffering far more casualties in absolute numbers than the crusaders. For years, many Christians even continued to claim it a victory. Halil Pasha, now in full control of Ottoman imperial policy, had no intention of embarking on grandiose military campaigns in the near future. The crisis that a policy of rapid expansion had brought to the empire was evident as far as he was concerned. The next round of rapid conquest would only occur with a change in leadership under Mehmet. Even then, Halil Pasha continued to champion a slower expansion. His opposition to the Ottoman siege even in 1453 would be the immediate cause of his downfall.

What did the defeat mean for the union of the Eastern and Western Churches? In truth, the union had been on rocky ground ever since the emperor returned to Constantinople in 1439. Nonetheless important debates on the subject took place in Constantinople even as late as 1445,[403] and the union is officially observed by some Christians down to the present day. The union would have faced challenges even if a dramatic victory had been won at Varna. But the defeat of the Latin crusaders undermined the emperor's fundamental argument for negotiating union in the first place. John VIII showed a certain lack of care for the issue once the papal and Burgundian vessels finally departed from the straits. He continued to

401 Wavrin (Imber's translation, p. 133).
402 Ibid.; Gazavât, p. 49.
403 Gill, *The Council of Florence*, pp. 365–366.

lobby for western support, but the results were negligible.[404] He died on October 17, 1448, only two weeks after Hunyadi's last failed offensive against the Turks at Kosovo.

In the immediate aftermath of the battle Rome sought to determine three things: who had won, what had happened to the king and what was the fate of Cesarini? At the end of 1444 Eugene IV addressed a letter to Wladislas in which he asked the king to make every provision to secure the safety and welfare of Cesarini, whom he heard may have been killed.[405] Still uncertain about the actual outcome of the battle, whether it was a Christian or Muslim victory, he expressed hope for the former. In May 1445 he addressed another letter to Vlad Dracul, for he had heard that the cardinal had sought refuge there after the battle.[406] The cardinal's fate remains uncertain even to this day. Ransanus, who had worked for the papal curia at the time, noted later on in the fifteenth century three possibilities:[407] he either died from his wounds, was submersed in a river while retreating north after having been robbed by a group of Wallachians, or he was first captured, then tortured and executed by the Turks. In any case, as the author notes, he either died at the battle or soon after.[408]

Hunyadi's urgently awaited return to Hungary was delayed by his capture at the hands of Vlad Dracul. The Wallachian prince no doubt feared the repercussions he was sure to face for his assistance to the crusaders, and hoped the handover of Hunyadi would placate the sultan and his men who he assumed were in swift pursuit. It soon became clear that the Ottoman Army was not in a position to pursue Hunyadi or even punish the Wallachians. When Lawrence Hedervary, then governing Hungary through the Royal Diet, threatened Vlad with war, he promptly handed Hunyadi over and escorted him personally to the border laden with lavish gifts. Vlad also lent assistance to Wavrin and his men in their dramatic campaign up the Danube in 1445. Hunyadi himself even made a showing during this campaign, though the expedition accomplished little of lasting significance.

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404 Ibid., pp. 368–370.

405 *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, nr. 304, pp. 452–453.

406 Ibid., nr. 305, pp. 453–454.

407 Petrus Ransanus, at the beginning of his *Epithoma rerum ungaricarum* (ed. Péter Kulcsár. Budapest: Akadémiai Kaidó, 1977) composed between 1490–92 wrote a portion called *de Ioanne Corvino*, wherein he discusses briefly the fate of the king and the cardinal.

408 Ransanus, p. 33.

Hunyadi never accepted the royal crown but went on to rule Hungary as regent. It was ultimately his son, Matthias Corvinus, who achieved for his father the culmination of a career whose foundations were built during the years of anti-Ottoman conflict under Wladislas' reign. Hunyadi made another attempt in 1448 to put together a coalition and defeat the Turks at Kosovo. At this time, however, the European powers seem to have resigned themselves to the fact of Ottoman supremacy and Hunyadi found virtually no international support. Even the papacy asked him to delay the expedition. Hunyadi's own resources were at this time quite considerable. He successfully raised a large army and in the end received the support of his Wallachian ally Dan. In the end, however, he lost the battle to Murad, who for the first time employed his own tabor against the invaders. Despite this setback Hunyadi achieved his greatest fame in 1456 during the Second Siege of Belgrade when he successfully defended the city against the seemingly unconquerable armies of Mehmet II, who had seized Constantinople only three years prior. Hungary would remain independent for another seventy years, until another Jagiellonian named Wladislas residing on the Hungarian throne ultimately lost Hungary to the Turks after his dramatic defeat at Mohacs in 1526.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

In the preceding work I set out to describe the political and institutional context and causes of the Ottoman-Hungarian conflict from 1438–1444 as well to provide the most accurate narration possible of the events themselves. In doing so, I have drawn on the widest possible range of sources both primary and secondary, and the result has been a fuller picture of the conflict and its causes than any other treatment of the subject up to now. This has resulted not only in the discovery of new information but also in the corroboration of certain disputed facts and the outright rejection of others.[1] In addition, I have throughout the work attempted to analyze the phenomena presented and draw larger conclusions relevant to a wide range of historical themes and discussions.

The context for the dramatic invasions of 1443 was determined by three major factors: intensified Ottoman aggression, the promotion of a crusade by the church, and the election of Wladislas. Yet it seems doubtful that a general anti-Ottoman offensive in the Balkans would have occurred in 1443 and 1444—despite the intentions of the Byzantines, the papacy and King Wladislas—were it not for the startling military successes of Hunyadi in the two years preceding. It was the momentum of these victories that mobilized the above-mentioned parties as well as other potential contributors for a general anti-Ottoman offensive. By early 1443 success against the Ottomans began to be seen as possible, even probable. The consequence was two grand expeditions, one resulting in a qualified victory for the crusaders, and the other in absolute defeat.

Among the most interesting threads of analysis is the dynamic interplay of interest group politics, religion, dynastic tradition, military strategy, and personal motivations in determining and executing policy. In the case of the Ottomans,[2] the campaign of expansion begun in the late 1430s can be viewed on the one hand as an attempt to fulfill the state's

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[1] The examples are too numerous to cite, and I instead refer the reader to the individual chapters and in particular to the footnotes.

[2] For a more in-depth discussion of this see primarily chapter two.

self-proclaimed role in the Islamic community as the spearhead of Islam. This unifying, thematic purpose harnessed the energies of the state, and found its highest expression in the person of the Ottoman sultan, who made a conscious attempt to conform to the ghazi tradition of his forebears. On the other hand this ideological drive for expansion was confined and directed by political realities. The Ottomans were not naive statesmen, and the renewal of intense aggression was also an attempt to take advantage of the political chaos in Hungary following King Sigismund's death. The settlement, albeit temporarily, of conflicts in Anatolia likewise opened the way for expansion northward. All of this was urged on by certain parties at court who knew that expansion would serve their own personal and group interests. They were aware that a policy of direct annexation and conquest resulting in fixed borders, guaranteed by treaties of non-aggression, would undercut the marcher lords' raison d'être and their most important source of income—captive slaves. This is what in fact took place under Murad's successors. The buffer states were eradicated and clear borders were eventually set governed by treaties that were for the most part enforced and observed. The devshirme and the slave trade increasingly compensated for the dwindling supply of captive slaves. Though akinji raiders remained present, their importance gradually declined. The Slaves of the Porte were allotted the most important positions in newly annexed territories as part of the Porte's increasing centralization of authority. All of this seems to have been what was expected by the Ottoman "war hawks" of the 1430s, who no doubt felt that in serving their own interest they were likewise serving their sultan, their civilization and their God.

The same complex interaction of motives was present in Hungary. The pro-Wladislas party saw in the Jagiellonians a potential savior against the Turks on the one hand, and a weakly established ruler who could be easily controlled to serve their interests on the other.[3] Just like the Ottoman war hawks, they sought an option favoring not only their group interests but also those of their kingdom and their religion. Wladislas had his own agenda, one that only in part aligned with his supporters. He and his loyal advisors quickly realized that prosecution of the crusade bolstered his threatened position among contenders both foreign and domestic. His opponents were aware of this as well. But it seems equally true that the king developed a personal interest in the expedition, urged on by the

[3] Chapter three and the succeeding chapters deal more in-depth with these issues.

appeals of those closest to him. He pursued the crusade even at a time when it was of questionable benefit to Hungary, and of virtually no benefit to the Kingdom of Poland. The results of this were ultimately disastrous, both for the king and his kingdoms.[4]

The most influential advocate of crusade at the king's court from late 1442 on was Cardinal Cesarini.[5] Just as in the case of Murad and Wladislas, we see in the cardinal an array of interwoven and mutually re-enforcing motivations that were personal, political and religious in a way that makes such categorizations seem fruitless. The crusade served the political interests of the church insofar as it emphasized the importance of the papacy and undercut the greatest contemporary threat to papal primacy—the conciliar movement. It was the promise of crusade which brought about the union of 1439, further elevating the pope's position. The efforts to deliver on these promises likewise promoted the image of the papacy as indispensable to the well-being of Christendom. But it is clearly wrong to assume that political motivations were the only, or even the primary, factor. Cesarini's concern for a unified Christendom was apparent throughout his career. His ability to convince the king of the importance of the expeditions was grounded in the fact that his own convictions were sincere. Much the same can be said of Eugene IV.

The truth is that Murad, Wladislas and Eugene IV set out to pursue policies that satisfied the greatest number of rational and non-rational concerns. Other states clearly had to choose between competing motivations. Ibrahim Bey of Karaman betrayed the Islamic community in order to survive and perhaps even score a decisive victory in the struggle against his increasingly more powerful neighbor. The same is true of George Branković, who maintained his precarious position by pursuing a policy emphasizing state and dynastic interest above all else. Duke Philip of Burgundy provides us with a counter-example. He spent a considerable amount of money to equip ships and supply men to participate in the expedition of 1444 despite the fact that it was of little direct benefit to him or his duchy. In his case non-rational considerations of tradition and piety played the primary role. Other examples described in the text—the Mamelukes, the Habsburgs, Genoa, Poland, Venice, Ragusa, etc.—had their own priorities and offer further insight into the interesting relation-

[4] See chapter seven.

[5] See chapters one, five, six and seven for Cesarini and the church's role in the conflict.

ships of fifteenth century states to the ongoing conflict between Islam and Christianity.

Part of the importance of studying this era from the perspective of military history lies in the composition of the societies in question. The Kingdom of Hungary and in particular the Ottoman Empire were governed by military elites who saw their primary purpose in the body politic as waging war. Their institutions, laws and power structures reflected this; governing structures and military structures were often one and the same. Any attempt to understand these conflicts must therefore look at the politico-military institutions involved.[6] These institutions had a profound effect on the make-up of the armies in question, the tactics they employed, and the strategies they could pursue. Though the decisive factor in these hard-fought and closely contested wars seems to have been the decisions made by the leaders themselves, these decisions can only be understood with reference to the tactical and technological capacities available to them.

Given the conditions in the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in 1438, and particularly in the spring of 1440, it must have seemed to outsiders that Ottoman expansion vis à vis Hungary would proceed unimpeded. Yet beginning with the successful defense of Belgrade in the summer of 1440 the tide of aggression was not only checked, it was reversed. By the winter of 1443 the Ottomans found themselves on the defensive, fighting for their very survival as a state. The role of John Hunyadi in effecting this startling change cannot be underestimated. Had a less-talented commander led the forces of Hungary there is little doubt that the Ottomans would have eventually achieved their strategic goals. His appearance and influence on events highlights the importance of individuals in determining historical outcomes.

But the fact is that despite Hunyadi's talents as a commander the victory went ultimately to the Ottomans. It is therefore tempting to ascribe a certain inevitability to these events, and assume that the Ottomans would have ultimately emerged victorious despite the influence of individual actors. The close analysis of the campaigns offered in the previous chapters refutes this notion. Each victory and/or defeat had resounding consequences that affected the nature and course of the following campaigns. The campaign of 1444 can only be understood with reference to the Long March of the year prior, which in turn only makes sense in light of

[6] See chapters two and three.

Hunyadi's victories of 1442. It is clear that any variation in the outcome of just one of these close-fought campaigns would have led to a completely different course of events. The Battle of Varna is the most dramatic example. It is clear from sources on both sides that the battle could have swung in either direction. Had Wladislas succeeded in slaying Murad and claimed victory it is almost certain that the Ottoman state would have experienced a collapse similar to that of 1402. The Ottomans' own fear about their precarious situation finds explicit mention in the sources, and it is equally visible in the desperate and drastic actions taken by the Porte in 1444. Could it have survived this trauma once again? It can be argued that the empire would have revived itself, only delaying the later conquests under Mehmet II by a few decades. But even if one accepts such an argument, which is far from incontestable, it is clear that an Ottoman defeat would have had a dramatic effect on the future course of events.

Conclusion

The sense of lost opportunity presented by the defeat at Varna was keenly felt by European contemporaries. In 1453, nearly a decade after the battle, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini sent Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki a copy of his public correspondence. This included the letters Piccolomini had written during his time in Frederick's chancellery. The disparaging comments Oleśnicki found there, as well as perhaps recent news of the fall of Constantinople, prompted him to write a lengthy response to Piccolomini, at the end of which he discussed Wladislas and the characteristics of his reign in Hungary.[7] He criticized Piccolomini's portrayal of the king as an imprudent young man guided mainly by ambition, and the image of Hunyadi as the main leader in the struggle against the Turks. "If Wladislas had lived on, Christendom would not be mourning the fall of Constantinople, but rather it would be celebrating the restitution of Europe by his own hand. He was not conquered by his own temerity, as some would assert, but rather by our own sinfulness, who failed him in guarding the straits and did not assist him in waging war, but instead ridiculed him." Piccolomini wrote back to Oleśnicki,[8] defending his correspondence as best he could. In the end the future Pope Pius II, who had earlier done so much to disparage the king and derail his attempts both to unite Hungary

[7] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, pp. 315–320.
[8] Ibid., pp. 320–335.

and successfully wage a crusade, was moved to eloquent praise of the king:

> I have learned from all who knew him that this adolescent king was possessed of a vast soul, a singular prudence, the utmost generosity, an ingenious shrewdness and a great care for administering justice. He was lacking in none of those things which are called royal virtues. For this reason I wish along with you (if it is proper to do so) that he still lived today. I judge it would have been better for Hungary, and better for Christendom (Christian blood) had he succeeded. Nor perhaps would the memorable Byzantine city of Constantinople... been conquered by the Turks, for with Wladislas living, the Turks would not have dared it. But, as you said, the famous king perished, a fact of more detriment not only to Poland, but also Hungary, than we at the time believed.[9]

The words of Oleśnicki and Piccolomini, both of whom were ill-disposed towards the king at the time of his death, ring sincere in their impression that had Wladislas survived at Varna the fate of the Balkans and of Byzantium would have been much different. Such a statement seems odd given the limited political aftereffects of such a dramatic climax to such a long and intense struggle. Borders did not shift, states did not collapse, even political alignments in the Balkans stayed roughly the same. The most important political effect was the death of the king and the ramifications this had in both Poland, Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. The importance of the conflict of 1438–1444 lay not in its political, but psychological effects. Throughout the remainder of the fifteenth century, despite the dramatic fall of Constantinople and a growing sense of threat, attempts to put together an international coalition to expel the Turks foundered. The princes of Europe took their lesson from the death of Wladislas. The outcome at Varna dispelled the brief hope between the autumns of 1442 and 1444 that the Ottomans might be defeated, and for the Ottomans it likewise affirmed their convictions regarding the strength and divine purpose of the empire, convictions which had been shaken to the core in the preceding months.[10] Piccolomini is faithful in his assess-

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[9] Ibid.

[10] İnalcik also argues that 1444 was an important "turning point" for the Empire ("*1444 yılı tarihi bir dönüm noktasıdır*"). He makes the same assessment of the battle's importance in pacifying an empire in crisis (*Fatih Devri*, p. 52): "Hatta müttefiklerinden her biri, Rumeli'nin işgalinden sonra ganimetin hangi parçasını alacağını tasarlamakla meşgul idi. Memleket içerisinde de, II. Murad'ın tahttan çekilmesiyle baş gösteren bir iktidar buhranı, Rumeli'de hakiki bir çözülme ile aynı zamana rastlamış bulunuyordu. İşte bütün bu kabus, Varna'da kazanılan zaferle dağılıp gitmiştir."

ment that had Wladislas survived, the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 would likely not have occurred.

The psychological effects of Varna endured well beyond the 1440s. Indeed, they are still manifest today. For the Turks, Varna comprises one of the great victories of early Ottoman history. After the reforms of Ataturk the state avoided nostalgia for the *ancien régime*, but this did not seem to extend to its military feats. Volume 14 of the series *Türk Asker Büyükleri ve Türk Zaferleri* [Great Men and Victories of the Turkish Army][11] is dedicated to the battles of Varna and the Second Battle of Kosovo, with the majority of attention being paid to the former. Prof. Feridun Emecen of Istanbul University has devoted a lengthy chapter to the subject of Varna in his forthcoming book on the great pitched battles of Ottoman history.[12] While researching and studying in Istanbul I was personally, and pleasantly, surprised at the number of Turks who had not only heard of the battle but could narrate a number of the details. The great victory at Varna abides as a reminder for their nation of able leadership and stalwart perseverance when faced with overwhelming challenges.

Though Wladislas' body was never found, soon after his death his tomb was constructed alongside that of other Polish kings and national heroes in the Polish Royal Cathedral and national pantheon on Wawel hill in Krakow. But there was still a great consciousness that the king's body lay elsewhere. As the renowned 16th century poet Jan Kochanowski wrote: "His martyred bones / lay not in his fatherland's tomb / His tomb is Europe, his headstone the snowy Balkans, / the inscription: an eternal memorial amongst Christians."[13] From the mid-nineteenth century several attempts were made by both Bulgarians and Poles to erect a monument to Wladislas on the alleged place of his death.[14] The culmination of these was the construction of his mausoleum in 1444 at Varna. The imposing edifice bearing the coats-of-arms of Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria was meant to serve as a reminder of "blood mutually shed in the unequalled Battle of Varna."[15] These examples demonstrate the signifi-

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[11] The title of the work is *Varna* (*1444*) *İkinci Kosova* (*1448*) *Meydan Muharabeleri ve II. Murat*.

[12] I owe great thanks to Prof. Emecen for allowing me to see a copy of this chapter prior to publication.

[13] *jego poświęcone | Kości nię są w ojczystym grobie położone: | Grób jego jęst Europa, słup śniezne Bałkany, | Napis: wieczna pamiątka między chrześcijany.*

[14] See Urszula Kaczmarek, "Warneńskie Pola—Dzieje Pomnika," *Balcanica Posnaniensa* VIII (1997): 209–227.

[15] Kaczmarek, p. 227.

cance of Varna and Wladislas as a symbol that reached far beyond the 1440s. The Polish uprisings of the nineteenth century and even the oft-portrayed image of Polish cavalrymen in 1939 rushing at ironclad German tanks took indirect inspiration from the symbol of Wladislas rushing headlong at a wall of janissaries in the face of insurmountable odds. The notion that the king's courageous sacrifice was an expression of a general national trait was noted by contemporaries. In contrasting the behavior of Wladislas and Hunyadi at Varna, Oleśnicki wrote in the above-mentioned letter from 1453: "Poles learn from their parents to never flee the battle. They must either be victorious or perish."[16] Despite one's personal judgments regarding the wisdom or rightness of such sentiments, it is hard to deny that they played a role in the Poles' own conception of national martyrdom.

When asking the question first raised in the introduction, "Why did Wladislas choose to charge the sultan's camp and why did Murad choose to stand his ground," is it unreasonable to believe that these men were aware of the above? Of course I do not mean they could foresee the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the partitions of Poland, or the heroic Battle of Gallipoli and the Second World War. But as a king and a sultan involved in what both men were conscious of as an epic struggle they must have known their comportment on that day would ring loud through ages to come. It was their consciousness of themselves as lasting symbols more than any religious, dynastic, political or military considerations that drove their decisions at Varna.

[16] *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti*, vol. 2, p. 319: "Poloni hoc ex parentibus didicerunt, ut ex bello nunquam fugiant, vincant aut moriantur, necesse est. "

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